

Books by
T. S. STRIBLING

THE SOUND WAGON

UNFINISHED CATHEDRAL

THE STORE

THE FORGE

BACKWATER

CLUES OF THE CARIBBEES

STRANGE MOON

BIRTHRIGHT

BRIGHT METAL

CRUISE OF THE DRY DOCK

TEEFTALLOW

FOMBOMBO

RED SAND

☆ ☆ ☆

T. S. STRIBLING

☆ ☆ ☆

THE
SOUND
WAGON

☆ ☆ ☆



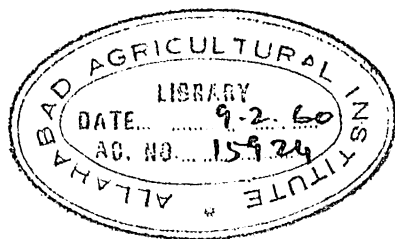
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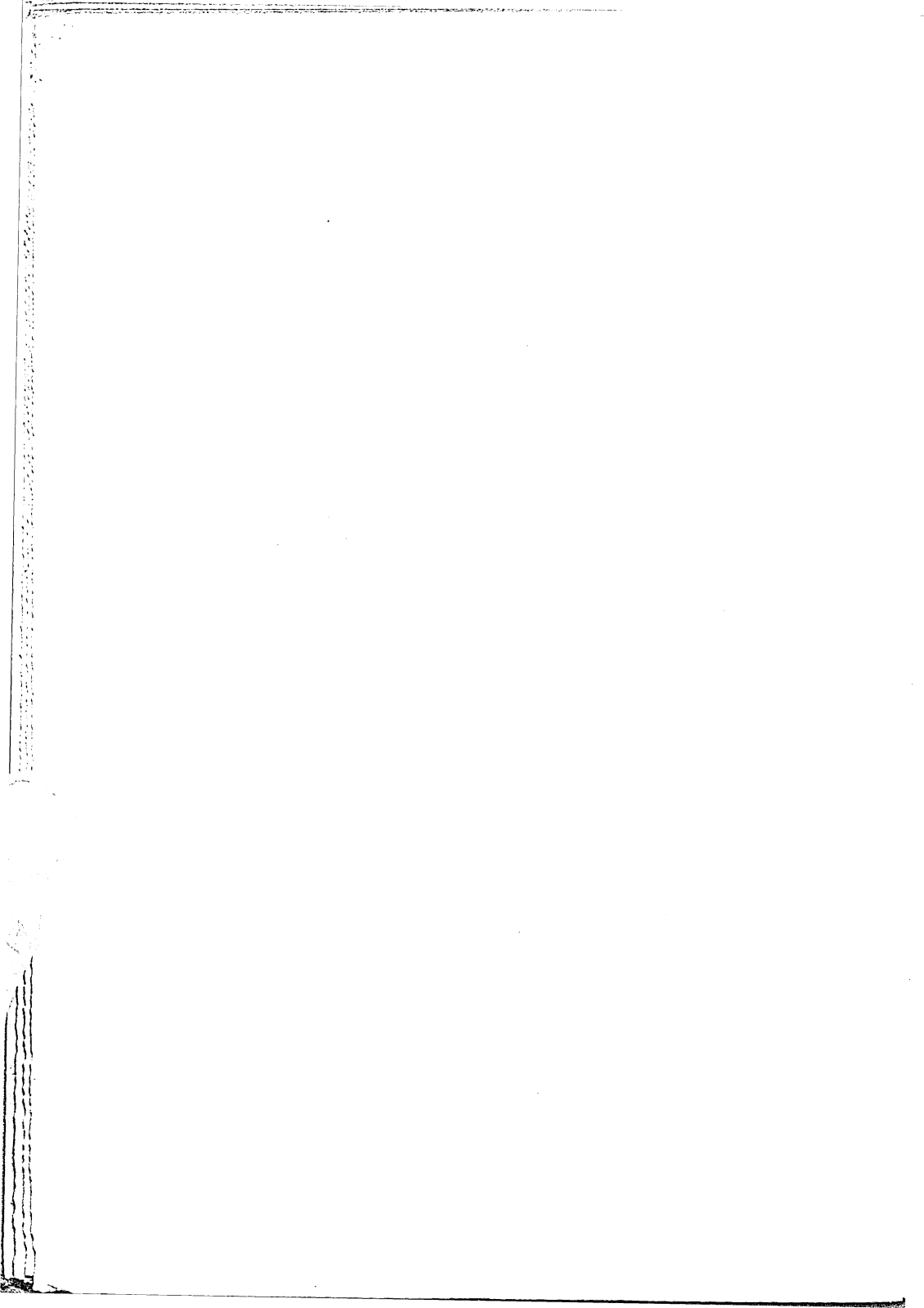
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AUTHOR'S NOTE

THE author of this book need hardly state in a story of this description that he has not copied any of the characters herein described from life. On the contrary the characters are so generalized that one could say much more truthfully that life has copied the characters contained in this novel.

T. S. S.

12. 1960 From Radio Service - Radio Service



THE SOUND WAGON



1

AMID THE DIN of traffic in the great American city of Megapolis a number of the shrillest, most raucous and disagreeable of the street sounds were superadded by deliberate intent to the general uproar for the paradoxical purpose of gaining a widespread, favorable and profitable publicity.

The public, on the other hand, schooled through necessity to a more or less complete inattention to all noises that did not pertain directly to its individual selves, flowed up and down the clamorous thoroughfares in a kind of wide subjective silence. So that the net result of all this competitive uproar was that each barker and salesman and advertiser boomed the worth and value of his wares mainly into his own ears.

Thus on the southeastern corner of the block containing the Albemarle Apartments an Italian peanut vender listened to the shrill whistle of his roaster, and when it went throaty he tapped it mechanically, displaced the drop of hot water in its larynx and restored it to its usual unobserved piping. In the same way the newsboys along the street shouted to themselves the latest strike, the most recent kidnappings and the baseball returns. A truck full of clowns moved past, advertising to each other the quips and jollities of their circus. A megaphone wagon, in a tremendous voice, thundered to its driver the pressing social necessity of voting for some candidate or other. Nobody in the street caught the name because nobody cared anything about it. However,

its uproar did bring to one of the lower windows of the Albemarle apartment house a personable, vaguely sporting looking brunet man, clad in the kind of reddish brown street suit which men of his sort somehow always manage to acquire. The megaphone wagon brought this gentleman to his window, and it held him there, staring at it in the blankest amazement and in the liveliest gratitude and hope. He could understand perfectly what it was saying. Its loudspeakers were thundering:

"Caridius, the People's choice! Vote for Henry Caridius, Independent Candidate for Congress! Free Agent of the People at Large! Tied by No Promises! Fettered by No Party Pledges! People's Champion against Gangsters, Graft and Corruption! Cast Your Ballot for Henry Lee Caridius!"

The brunet gentleman at the window gesticulated silently but vehemently at two other youngish men who were taking cards out of a card index that sat on a table. When they looked up and came inquiringly toward him he snapped out, reducing his words to the shortest compass, so as not, unduly, to interrupt the thundering in the street:

"Look! Listen! Hear that?"

His surprise spread to the other two men. The taller ejaculated:

"My God, is that wagon ballyhooing you?"

The second man said:

"Why, Henry, what in the world—— That's the Fourth Ward's sound wagon, isn't it?"

"Certainly, certainly it is——same old green sound wagon!"

"How did you get it?"

"Why, Gearing, I didn't know I had it!"

The tall man of the trio interposed wonderingly:

"Look here, Caridius, you don't suppose it's possible, you don't imagine that Krauseman could possibly have switched over to your candidacy. . . ."

The second man made a negative gesture.

"Sawbrey, of course not, with Henry making his strong noncorruptionist fight on graft and gangsters!"

The man called Sawbrey shook his head as he continued to gaze after the inexplicable wagon.

"All candidates start out on an anti-graft campaign, Gearing. Krauseman knows that."

"But, hell," protested Gearing argumentatively, "Henry means his. He's not a politician; Krauseman's bound to know that he's not a politician, he's a—a——" Here Mr. Gearing came to a pause because there was no word in the English language that denoted just the thing he had in mind.

"I'm a protest against politicians," supplied Mr. Caridius neatly.

As the last thunders of the sound wagon subsided in the distance, a rather pretty woman came out of an inner room.

"Henry," she called, then saw the other two men and interpolated, "Hello, Mr. Sawbrey. Hello, Gearing. . . . Henry, didn't that megaphone wagon go past here just now booming out your name?"

"Mrs. Caridius," exclaimed Sawbrey, "I was just telling Henry it meant that Krauseman had switched from Congressman Blanke to him."

"But why would he do that?"

"Now, now, Mrs. Caridius, don't ask me . . . some political break or other . . . you know Krauseman is a dictator. . . ."

"Why would they break . . . you know Blanke wouldn't be trying to start any reforms against Krauseman. . . ."

"Oh, not reforms . . . he might want a bigger cut out of Krauseman's take-outs. Or Krauseman might want something that Blanke was pulling down for himself. . . ."

"It's no break at all," decided the wife in a warm voice. "Krauseman simply saw his candidate was in for a licking, and he is trying to get aboard our band wagon before it's too late."

"Listen!" ejaculated Gearing, picking up his hat. "I'm going to catch up with that wagon and ask the driver if he knows why he's tooting up our man?"

Caridius reached toward his lieutenant.

"Hold on! Take some cards if you go. Anderson has seen all the names to the blue blotter in the third tray. You take 'em from there . . . that'll be the voters down on Pine Street."

"All right, I'll see the wagon and go on down there . . . now I'm moving this blotter up to where my cards left off." He stood to one side and exhibited his marker, then hurried out of the apartment, through the lobby, and into the street.

Mrs. Caridius watched Gearing's departure through the window. Her husband followed her gaze and remarked as a gesture of gratitude to Sawbrey for what he and Gearing were doing for him:

"Well, if by any chance I should be elected it won't be through that sound truck or any concession from Krauseman, it'll be through friends like Gearing."

Mr. Sawbrey made some polite disclaimer of any great exertion on his part and went on speculating as to what could have been the reason for the megaphone wagon advertising Caridius' campaign. Mrs. Ellora Caridius, who was still looking out the window, interposed presently in a dry disapproving tone just loud enough for her husband to hear:

"Henry, there comes your Connie Stott."

The candidate for Congress again followed his wife's gaze, this time with the uncomfortable feeling of a husband at the approach of a girl about whom his wife has her speculations.

"Uh . . . I suppose she has used up all her cards and is back for more," he stated in a low but positive tone that warned Ellora not only that Miss Connie Stott was working in his own, and therefore in her own, behalf but that Sawbrey was still in the room.

"I hope it's for cards," said Ellora with suspicion and resentment saturating her undertone.

Mr. Sawbrey took his turn at the card-index files.

"Well, I'll breeze out and see if I can see anybody. . . . I'm taking the first half of Endymion Avenue . . . and

look here," he added heartily, to show that he had heard nothing of the little domestic interchange between husband and wife, "I wouldn't be at all surprised if Mrs. Caridius is right. Maybe Krauseman sees you are going to win and he is shoving that wagon out to root for you at the last minute to save his own face. You know that baby falls on his feet no matter how hard you throw him down." Sawbrey laughed at his own observation and started for the door.

"All right, let's hope so, and try to get as many out to the polls as you can, Harry, before they close." Caridius held up a hand in salute as his political worker went out the door.

The shutter no sooner had closed, however, when the candidate for Congress turned on his wife.

"Ellora, what in the world do you mean, making such remarks before Sawbrey?"

"He didn't hear."

"The devil he didn't . . . of course he heard. He wouldn't have walked out of here saying he thought I was going to win and that Krauseman was on the run unless he was embarrassed and had to think quick of something to say, even if it didn't make sense."

Ellora looked at her husband.

"I don't care if he did hear . . . I ought to expose you to your friends instead of protecting you like I do!"

"A little more protection like that and I won't have any friends . . . and what is there to expose?"

Ellora lifted her chin and her pretty eyes flashed.

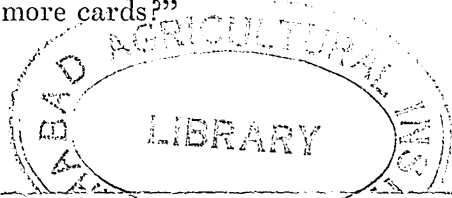
"Huh, you know . . . that Katherine your uncle hired and put in your office when you first set up practicing law here in——"

"For God's sake! Go back to that five years ago, and there was never anything to it to begin with."

"I know that's what you always say."

Caridius controlled himself.

"Listen, the question is what are you going to say when Connie Stott comes in here for some more cards?"



"And the question with me is, what are you going to say to her?"

The politician made a gesture of despair.

"Good Lord, nothing. Nothing at all, except, 'Here are some more cards,' and I'll thank her for all she's doing for me and you both . . . you . . . you too, mind you!"

A sudden swift and sacrificial change swept over Ellora.

"There she is at the door! I'll go out! I'll take a walk! I won't stay here and spoil any sort of talk you and Connie Stott want to have together!"

"No, no, no you don't! Stay here and know what we say! My God, I don't want you throwing up to me what you think we . . . Ellora, damn it, stay here . . . don't go!"

"You needn't swear," she cried. "I'm going out as fast as I can," and she rushed toward the inner door and slammed it behind her.

In that brief indefinite moment when simple noise fills a room like air the outer door of the apartment opened and a trim mannish-looking girl, almost as tall as Caridius himself, entered the doorway. She looked at Caridius, who stood smiling mechanically in the midst of the almost instantly quieted commotion.

"Are you by yourself, Henry?" asked Miss Stott in a slightly puzzled tone.

The candidate began explaining that Gearing and Sawbrey had just gone out in this zero hour of their political fight, and the way he said this suggested that their departure had been so energetic and enthusiastic that they had left the room in the resonant condition in which she had found it.

"I suppose Mrs. Caridius is at home," suggested the girl, glancing at the quieted door.

"I believe she is somewhere around here. . . ."

Miss Stott interrupted him triumphantly:

"Oh say, Henry, did you hear the sound wagon go by while ago?"

The candidate picked up an abrupt interest in the conversation.

"Hear it! Of course I did! How in the world did the Krauseman organization ever come to——"

Miss Stott brightened out of a carefully mannish personality into a triumphant girl.

"I got Krauseman to do it!"

"You! You! Why, what did you do to him . . . hypnotize him?"

She began to laugh.

"I don't know . . . maybe. I went around and asked him to vote for you . . . his big old house was on my beat."

"Connie! No, you didn't do that."

"Yes, and he said, 'Oh, I don't mind, I've already voted for Andrew Blanke, but I just as soon vote again for your man,' just like that." The girl snapped her fingers and began to laugh.

"And what did you say?"

"I told him we were a reform party and we couldn't have him voting twice, even for us; that we couldn't reform corruption corruptly. He was really a very nice old fellow, we hit it off very well together, and finally I said:

"'Look here, I can't allow you to vote for Henry, but how about putting your Fourth Ward sound wagon out on the streets and rooting for him?'"

"He became a little serious at this, and finally he said:

"'Well, I don't believe that would hurt Andrew Blanke's race very much, do you, Miss Stott?'"

"And I said frankly, 'Why, Mr. Krauseman, I don't suppose it would.'"

"And he laughed and said, 'All right, take it along if it would be of any benefit to you . . . anything to accommodate the ladies.'"

Caridius laughed incredulously.

"Connie, you don't mean it!"

"Yes, and I told him that while it wouldn't hurt Mr. Blanke it would certainly be a boost to you . . . give you a sort of start on a very long hill. So he just wrote me out a note to Leckin's Garage, down in the Fourth Ward, and I

went down there and they let me have it . . . that's what you heard."

"Well I'll be hanged! Connie, you're a wonder. If I should by any chance get that office you would be the very first person I'd——" Here he checked himself amid sentence and said with less exuberance, "So Ellora was wrong. . . . I must tell her just how we did get that wagon." He started for the door.

"Why, how did she think we got it?" asked Connie with a faintly different note in her voice.

"She thought Krauseman saw we were about to win and had come over to our side as a last chance."

"No," corrected Connie dryly, "he knew we couldn't win, and he didn't need the machine himself, so he just did us a favor."

"Oh Ellora!" called the husband. He opened the inner door when his wife appeared. "Ellora, that sound wagon we just heard. Connie here got it for us. She asked Krauseman for it and he let her have it. What do you know about that?"

Ellora smiled a tight, polite smile.

"That comes of having a charming helper."

Caridius was glad to see his wife appreciated what had been done for him. He went on enthusiastically:

"Now, listen, Ellora, Connie and I have got to dash out and stage a last minute rally. We want at least to make a showing this election. And listen, if any of the boys come back, give 'em the cards from the blue blotter on down."

"Yes, certainly . . . you . . . and Miss Connie are going out together?"

She asked this in a monotone, but amiably, and Caridius thought, as he and Connie passed out the door, that Connie had achieved such a master stroke in his campaign that even his wife now had for her a friendly feeling.

Ellora watched them go out together and then from the window followed their progress down the boulevard. The sight of her husband beside the tall trim Connie Stott faintly sickened her. She tensed her fingers and wished she could

scratch Connie Stott's poised, uppish, mannish face. The tall girl somehow had wormed the sound wagon out of Krauseman, and Ellora felt that she knew how Connie had managed it.

"And now," she thought bitterly, "she is working the same game on that simp of a Henry Caridius!"

The fact that Connie Stott probably had assisted her husband very greatly in driving this entering wedge into the intricate world of politics never entered Ellora's thoughts one way or the other.

2

MR. HENRY LEE CARIDIUS and his political helper, Miss Connie Stott, moved along the street from the Albemarle Apartments at the hesitating pace of persons who pick their way through traffic and consult written addresses at the same time.

To increase the mental complication of her performance Miss Stott gave snatches of her thought to Mrs. Ellora Caridius. She thought it was a pity Ellora was the sort of woman she was. Henry Lee was such a friendly, sociable, plausible fellow that he ought to get on quite well in politics even if he had failed as a lawyer. The one great thing for a politician to possess was plausibility. But no matter how talented Henry Lee was along those lines, Ellora could turn away friends just as fast as Henry could make them. It was really too bad Henry had married such a wife.

At this point in her musings Caridius looked up at a door then down at one of his cards.

"This says Johnny Blair lives in 428."

"No, that's out; I meant to take it out of the pack and didn't. Johnny Blair has moved clear out of this congressional district somewhere up on the North Side."

"Did you write him a note to come back and vote?"

"Yes, I got his address and sent him a card; but if you can't pry them out to the polls with a visit, you are not likely to do it with a card."

Caridius thought of his wasted cards, thousands of them, pursuing migrant American voters, and their envelopes cost him a cent and a half apiece and they were not forwardable, whereas the Honorable Andrew Blanke franked his without spending a penny and franked mail was forwardable.

The two entered a climb-up apartment house. Connie scrutinized a crippled letter box in a dimly lighted hallway and presently said:

"Third floor . . . Laura and Mary Swingle."

"They promised you that they would . . ."

"Oh yes, when I saw them they said they weren't interested in politics, but when I explained to them that you were an independent candidate and that they could vote against both parties at once by voting for you, they said they would come."

As the two started up the naked dusty steps Caridius said:

"Connie, you've worked like the devil for me."

The girl gave a deprecatory laugh.

"It's been fun."

"Well, if I should be elected . . . if by any possibility I should be elected, I'm going to make the time you've spent on me worth more to you than . . . than any work you've ever done in your life."

Connie knew that Caridius meant a private secretaryship for her . . . if he were elected to Congress. It was a very long "if," but still the shimmer of a possibility of working with Caridius day after day in Washington filled her with an anticipation of pleasure. Then with a kind of letting down of her fancy she thought of Ellora. She could imagine

what Ellora Caridius would say to such a plan. And again she thought what a pity it was that Henry had linked his life to such a . . . At this point she pressed a buzzer on the third floor, and this brought her back to reality.

She was faintly amused at her own heat toward Ellora Caridius. A private secretaryship to Ellora's husband in Washington was so very tenuous and far away. The only concrete objective of Henry Lee's campaign was merely to make a showing. It was an attempt to establish a bloc of dependable and persistent votes free of the city ring. The city ring was a duplex ring in which the major parties, Democratic and Republican, fitted so nicely together that they formed a unity. They were like those twisted gold rings from India where two, three, or even a half-dozen crooked circles of gold join together as a single smooth solid band. That was what their political club was, a kind of protest against the stereotyped sculduggery of American municipal politics; and it was good fun, just as she had said. And besides that they already had gained enough political influence for their whole club to roll tenpins down at the Ajax Bowling Alleys on Middenhall Street every Sunday afternoon entirely free of charge.

The door on the third floor opened a few inches, a thin gray-haired woman peered out, saw who it was, and opened the shutter more generously.

"Oh, it's you, Miss Stott."

"Yes, we have come to ask, have you and your sister voted yet?"

"Oh, is this the day? . . ." She turned and called, "Laura, the young lady has come to tell us this is the day of the election."

A voice from inside called back:

"Ask her where is the voting place."

Connie began careful directions:

"You go down to Clement Avenue and Twelfth Street. You walk through a barber shop and get into a back alley. You turn to the right down the alley, walk four doors, and

you come to what used to be an old insect exterminator shop. It has over the door the picture of a dog scratching himself for fleas. That's where you vote."

"What did they put it in such an out-of-the-way place for?"

"Why, to make it hard to find unless you're tipped off how to get there."

"Well, isn't that a shame!"

"Yes, it is; it helps keep the ballots in the hands of the ring."

"Well, just for that I *will* go vote," announced the old woman determinedly.

Caridius and his helper thanked the old woman for the impersonal and altruistic effort she was about to make in the candidate's behalf and returned to the street once more. They pushed their way through the crowded thoroughfare to the next qualified voter on the registration list who lived two blocks distant. This place proved an elevator apartment, and the two electioneers rested a few moments as they rode up six stories to the rooms of a Mr. Simpson. They rang and were still further pleased when Mr. Simpson came to the door and told them he had already voted. Miss Stott thanked the gentleman and said:

"Mr. Simpson, allow me to introduce you to the man you voted for. If we lose this race we are going to make another and still another. We want to form a bloc of permanent respectable unpurchasable votes; a kind of political focus for people who prefer honesty to thievery. . . ."

As Connie repeated these set phrases Mr. Simpson bowed and offered a hearty and somewhat flattered hand.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Blanke, I'm sure."

Miss Stott paused in dismay.

"I hope you didn't vote for Congressman Blanke!"

"Why, ye-es," ejaculated Simpson, also taken aback, "wasn't he the man you . . ."

"No, I said Caridius . . . Henry Lee Caridius . . . this is Mr. Caridius."

Simpson stared in confusion.

"Well I be damned! I saw that damned name, Blanke . . . first one on the list, and it sounded kind of familiar. I decided it must be the name you mentioned."

"No, you probably recognized it because Andrew Blanke has been our congressman for the last eighteen or twenty years."

"That may have been the reason," conceded Simpson, chagrined. "I knew I'd heard it." Then he added with a touch of self-respect, "I never dabble in politics, never pay any attention to 'em."

The little group pulled themselves together over the faux pas.

"No harm really done," said Caridius laughing. "All we hoped to do this time is to make a show, but remember it from now on, Mr. Simpson, our Independent Voters' Alliance will always have at least one honest man in every race. It won't be me next time, be one of the other boys, but there will always be somebody, so next election remember that and look us up."

This speech impressed Mr. Simpson.

"By George, I believe in what you people are doing," he said earnestly. "This lady here explained it to me. I believe, Mr. Caridius, it's the duty of every American citizen to look into politics and vote for some good honest man. If we could just cut the thieves out of our city and state politics we wouldn't have to pay so much in taxes."

Caridius offered his hand.

"Certainly it would help. Well, good-bye, and next election remember to look up the I.V.A. candidate before you vote for the first name you see on the ballot."

Mr. Simpson laughed heartily.

"I'll do it, by God I'll do it. And I'm glad to have met you, Mr. Caridius. I believe you are the first candidate for Congress that I ever had the pleasure of meeting."

When Miss Stott and Caridius entered the street again they were stopped in their campaigning by a short powerful

man with black eyes and a curved nose who saluted the candidate with short thick fingers to his derby.

"The Honorable Henry Caridius, how goes the election?"

"So-so, Myerberg," acknowledged the politician in a flatted tone.

"So-so, the devil!" cried Myerberg heartily. "Didn't I hear your name ballyhooed up and down the avenue about a half hour ago by the Big Stick's truck?"

Caridius had no intention of expanding toward Myerberg.

"You may have heard that."

Myerberg stared at the politician and his aide in amazement.

"What a man! Miss Stott, did you ever see such a fellow? Standing there cool as a beer when he's made . . . arrived . . . elevated to be Krauseman's pet out of a clear political sky! Why, I couldn't believe my eyes . . . or my ears. And yet there he stands, as casual and indifferent as if he had been handed a cigarette, and tells me his campaign is 'so-so.'"

Miss Stott laughed at the short curly-headed man.

"You mean the sound wagon?"

"Yes, the voice from the ark of the covenant, run by compressed air, ballyhooing Caridius here . . . is it possible that the Big Stick at last has fallen out of the political bed which he occupied so long with the Great Panjandrum?"

Caridius did not glance at Miss Stott, but he hoped she would explain nothing about the sound wagon. He was relieved when she said very cordially:

"I don't know of any break between Mr. Krauseman and Mr. Blanke."

Myerberg lifted a hand.

"A discreet woman is worth her weight in gold. Well, of course, that's politics. You've got to learn fast if you learn at all, if you make one wrong step you're out." He touched his hat again. "Well, congrats, congrats, Caridius, and I mean it from the bottom of my heart. And I hope I will be

able to repeat my felicitations on many election days to come. Well, so long, I've got to run."

"Thanks, Myerberg," said Caridius coolly, and watched him go.

The woman turned to her principal in amazement.

"Why, Henry, you were downright rude to Myerberg!"

"I don't like Myerberg," stated the candidate flatly.

"Just what place do you imagine your likes and dislikes will have in your future?" inquired the girl ironically. "And what have you got against him anyway? . . . Never had any business dealings with him, did you?"

"No-o."

Connie studied her principal.

"It can't be because he's a Jew?"

"Oh no-o . . . I like Jews . . . some Jews."

Miss Stott drew her conclusion.

"I see you are one of those Americans who feel very broad-minded and altruistic because now and then a Jew can make himself so agreeable to him that he doesn't mind the man's being a Jew."

"No, it isn't that," protested Caridius, not enjoying this classification. "I . . . er . . . Myerberg insulted me once."

"Were you an attorney on the other side of a suit from Myerberg?"

"No, it wasn't that at all."

The girl stood looking at her candidate, started to speak, but changed her words to:

"Come on, let's work our way down to the polls."

"No, after this I've got to tell you."

"No, you don't have to."

"The idea of me not having to!" ejaculated Caridius, annoyed at these feminine tactics. Connie reminded him for a moment of Ellora. "The truth is . . . he refused a partnership with me."

"A partnership!"

"Yes . . . that shows at least that I am perfectly open minded about Jews in the abstract."

"How came you to be offering Myerberg a partnership . . . or wanting in on any such . . ."

"Well, I thought my uncle was getting tired of paying my office rent, and I wasn't getting anywhere in civil law. So I thought I would better be a criminal lawyer than no lawyer at all."

Connie dropped the subject of the partnership on a sudden thought.

"Look here, if Myerberg believes you have Krauseman behind you, maybe a lot of other people will think so too. Wouldn't it be funny if Krauseman's generosity should elect you after all?"

"Oh, that couldn't be."

"But Myerberg was sincere, and he's a pretty wise lad around town."

"Yes, but he doesn't know the reason why we got the sound truck."

At that moment Caridius saw Myerberg returning rapidly up the street in their direction. He was evidently looking for them in the traffic and sure enough held up a hand at them. As he came up he explained briefly:

"Met Meltofsky going to Pfeifferman's court, turned my business over to him and came back here."

Caridius nodded noncommittally as the lawyer fell into step with the two companions.

After a few seconds Myerberg began again:

"Now look here, Caridius, I could base what I have to offer you on ideal grounds with a certain justification, but I'm not placing it on ideal gr——"

"Offer me?" ejaculated Caridius, turning to look at the man.

Myerberg returned his gaze out of black, inscrutable eyes.

"Yes . . . offer you."

"What are you offering me?"

"Uh . . . well . . . not anything personally."

"Then what are you offering me impersonally?" inquired Caridius, at once suspicious and puzzled.

Connie Stott, who was appraising the lawyer, forecast what he was after.

"Mr. Myerberg wants to join the Independent Voters' Alliance," she hazarded.

"Oh, is that it?" questioned Caridius.

Myerberg nodded.

"And as I say, I am not putting it on idealistic grounds, although I could just as well as other members of your organization."

"Certainly," agreed Caridius.

"So I'll put it frankly on the grounds that you may win. Now I had thought about joining your organization before it had a chance, but just to be plain about it, I don't like crusading. There are so many crusaders . . . they are so sincere . . . they have so many little organization fees and dues, and they get so nowhere."

"I see you are an idealist when idealism wins," observed Caridius.

"But I'm not joining on any such grounds," repeated the lawyer with the crispness of one protecting his name from scandal.

"Well, anyway, we're very glad to have you," said Caridius impassively.

"All right, I'd like to come in. What does it cost me?"

"Well . . . the dues of a . . . a founder are . . . seven hundred and fifty dollars," said Caridius. And as he quoted this he remembered not only his two closest friends who each had donated that amount to his campaign, but he recalled the very expressions on their faces as they signed the checks. He and they had determined on the title "founder" to designate their honor above the mere two-dollar-and-fifty-cent "contributing members." Myerberg, if he joined, would be the third and no doubt the last "founder" of the Independent Voters' Alliance.

The lawyer nodded acquiescence.

"But before you mail your check to Miss Stott, I must warn you that Krauseman let Miss Stott have the sound

wagon because he knew Blanke was a sure bet and his organization wouldn't need it."

Myerberg's countenance did not change in the least. He nodded again.

"I knew that, of course."

Caridius was astonished.

"You did . . . and do you still want to join?"

The lawyer spread his hands.

"I tell you I knew that all the time, why do you say 'still'?"

"Well . . . all right . . . Connie, give him our address."

During this conversation the trio had walked a considerable distance toward the polling place of the Fourth Ward. Their talk was now interrupted by a raucous voice haranguing a knot of beggarly men on the street corner. Myerberg never really observed the obstruction, he pushed his way through the crowd. Miss Stott, however, half listened to the speech. An unkempt fellow was declaiming with the sputtery vehemence of his kind:

"Think of such figures, comrades, two million farrowing sows, not butchered, not sold, not eaten, but killed and flung into the Missouri River until that great stream stunk and the very fish in its waters were poisoned! And who did that? Was it maniacs? Was it crazy men? Was it foreign invaders seeking to overthrow America by producing stark hunger and a plague? No, the motivating force behind that outrage to humanity was the wisdom and political sagacity of the political rulers of the United States! It was their cure for overproduction! Pork wasted in the West! Carloads of oranges dumped in California! Tanks of milk poured out in the North! Cotton plowed under in the South! Our country had produced such vast amounts of commodities; prices had become so low that they were no longer profitable. But, comrades, it is the holy text of capitalistic countries that commodities must be profitable! What are commodities for? Are they to eat? Are they to wear? Are they to heal the sick and house the homeless? Why, my God no! Commodi-

ties are to gain a profit. And unless that profit grows larger and larger the manufacturer sees that his business is not prospering. So he must quit manufacturing, he must destroy what he has already fabricated so he can sell what is left at a profit. This shows that he is a devout pundit, obeying the holy text of capitalism.

"And, comrades, while this nation-wide sabotage was being carried on, you and I, the people, tramped from town to town, not even hoping to get a job, just a crust, hungry, cold, miserable, and that sabotage represents the wisdom of our American overlords . . . and their humanity!"

A kind of dull jostling noise that represented cheering arose among the tatterdemalions. This was interrupted by three policemen pushing into the crowd and shouting in hard constabulary tones:

"Move along! Get along! Don't block traffic!"

The speaker flung out a hand.

"I demand my constitutional right of free——"

One of the officers seized the speaker's wrist and swung him awkwardly off his box, then moved away with him while he still protested for his constitutional rights.

The other two policemen continued hustling on the crowd, who jeered at them. Myerberg caught Caridius by the arm and propelled him toward the box.

"Answer him," hurried the lawyer, "grab his box and answer him. . . ."

"But the police will——"

"Try it! Try it! All they can do is to stop you!"

Under Myerberg's volition Caridius stepped up on the box.

"Gentlemen, fellow citizens," he began.

The listeners turned toward this new speaker who had taken the stand of the displaced orator.

One of the policemen whirled, saw Caridius on the box, jabbed a whistle in his mouth and made toward him, shrilling for assistance. A little thrill went through Caridius at the approach of the officer.

"Gentlemen," repeated the politician, "I represent the Independent Voters' Alliance. . . ."

The policeman rasped out:

"Git down off that box before I——"

Myerberg angled his stocky figure in between the officer and the box. His hat was knocked off. He put out a hand.

"O'Sheen! O'Sheen!" he called quickly, but with a certain composure.

O'Sheen glanced at the lawyer.

"What the hell?"

"That's Mr. Caridius on the box."

"Who the hell's he?"

"The man the Big Stick's sound wagon was ballyhooing not two hours ago."

The officer halted his charge.

"Was that the name in the megaphone wagon?"

"Yes . . . Caridius."

"I thought it was Blanke."

"No, you didn't listen, I did . . . it was Caridius."

The scumlike group drew near the two men and overheard them; they began booing. One of them called:

"Hey, ain't you goin' to take down the Big Stick's man?"

"Hey, move on, you!" ordered the officer.

News went over the crowd that the Big Stick's man was talking.

One of the tatterdemalions shouted out:

"Has he got a permit?"

And O'Sheen called back belligerently:

"Hell, your man was speaking without a permit!"

Myerberg interrupted loudly:

"Yes, Mr. Caridius has got a permit," and he pushed his way to O'Sheen, drawing out his bill fold.

O'Sheen felt what Myerberg thrust in his palm. He held up a hand.

"Yes, Mr. Caridius has got a permit, he can go ahead and speak."

Caridius began:

"Gentlemen and fellow citizens, I represent the Independent Voters' Alliance in a state-wide and a nation-wide fight against graft, favoritism, and political corruption!"

Some hecklers began booing and shouting:

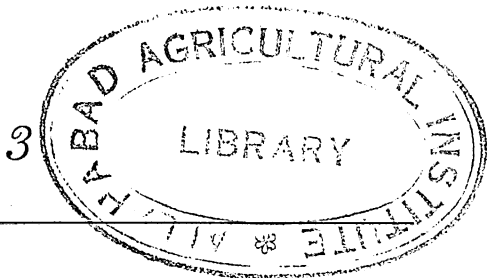
"Put him down! Git off of our box!"

"I would not, gentlemen, as the previous speaker so disloyally suggested, junk the whole political structure erected by the brain and blood of our forefathers merely because the present administration made a step of drastic economic readjustment. . . ."

More boos.

"I say desperate situations require desperate remedies. What my party demands and will have is a government free from graft, free from favoritism, free from political corruption . . ."

As Caridius' speech went on, the personnel of the audience changed. Middle-class hearers paused for a moment to learn what one of their own kind had to say concerning the national crisis. The tatterdemalions filtered away in the crowd, no longer held together by the warmth of their speaker's sympathy.



WHILE MR. HENRY LEE CARIDIUS made his set speech against graft, political corruption, favoritism and high taxes, delivered somewhat ironically from the ousted speaker's box, an Italian girl came up to Myerberg and Miss Stott and tried to speak to them. In this the girl was not at first successful because the lawyer and the woman political worker were discussing their candidate's speech.

The short solid lawyer standing in the crowd looking up at Caridius had inquired meditatively why the typical speech of a middle-class candidate for Congress was never political.

Miss Stott was surprised.

"Isn't it political to condemn graft, favoritism and bought votes?"

"Why no, that doesn't contemplate political action, it is a mere clearing away of the rubbish which will reach a political consent looking toward political action."

"Then since our Independent Voters' Alliance is merely fighting corruption, we are not a political organization?"

"No, you are simply trying to oil up the political machine so it will run in the manner it was meant to run, but societies such as yours never suggest a new destination."

"Well, we have no quarrel with the destination of our government, it's how we get there."

"But that's illogical," shrugged Myerberg, "because the only way to reach any destination is to pursue the road that leads to it. Now, if you like where you are, you can't possibly quarrel with graft, corruption, favoritism and fraud, because that's the road that brings you here. No, really, political reform parties are pure nonsense."

"Why, I don't see that," ejaculated Connie, nonplussed.

"Don't you know that human nature is always the same; that if you put them back in their original political milieu, they will work themselves back to what they are now? . . . No, you have to give people a new objective to persuade them to take a different path."

Miss Stott stared at the short lawyer bewildered.

"Look here, if you think that, why did you join our Alliance?"

Myerberg shrugged.

"I think it has a chance to win . . . and I'm not an idealist."

Miss Stott, who had entered politics as an amateur and had found some entertainment and considerable self-approval

in the rôle, was taken aback at the lawyer's abrupt reversal of her rôle. She was about to continue her argument when she finally became aware of the Italian girl at her elbow. The girl was saying:

"Miss . . . you . . . you are with the gentleman who is speaking, are you not?"

"Yes, yes," she answered absently, and then went on to the lawyer. "But look here, you think it is wrong for people to sell their votes, don't you?"

"Why no, a vote presupposes an opinion as to what course of political action will bring the voter the greatest good; but if he has no opinion and is given the vote anyway, then the greatest good he can get out of it is to sell his vote for what it will bring him. No, really, I think our law forbidding the free and unrestricted sale of votes deprives the great majority of our unimaginative and nonpolitical Americans of the only real benefit their votes will ever be to them."

Such heresy irritated Miss Stott. She now saw that Myerberg was jesting with her, and she considered the topic too serious for a joke. She turned, annoyed, to the Italian girl who had repeated her question.

"Yes, yes, both of us, Mr. Myerberg and I, are with the man who is speaking, but Mr. Myerberg there is the Judas."

"The Judas?" ejaculated the girl, not understanding.

"That's correct, the Judas."

"But the man who is speaking is . . . is he Mister Caridius?"

"That's right."

"Is he the man whose name I heard in the sound wagon while ago?" she pressed eagerly.

Miss Stott agreed to this also and glanced at Myerberg with the thought that when Boss Krauseman vouchsafed the sound truck to Caridius he may have helped him far more than he imagined he would.

"Then he . . . Mister Caridius . . . is a politician," continued the girl nervously, and Miss Stott saw that she was fingering a rosary under her blouse.

"If he is making a speech, of course he is a politician," pointed out Miss Stott.

"Oh no, miss," denied the girl at once, "a politician is a man who can get you something, and the men who speak on this box cannot get you anything at all."

"Young lady," interposed Myerberg in the thicker tones of his race, "I have just been explaining to Miss Stott that in America we have no politicians and no politics. We have nothing to make us political, we have just ourselves. . . . Mr. Caridius there is not a politician."

At the girl's look of disappointment and distress Miss Stott made a mothering gesture.

"Don't pay any attention to him. He makes jokes. Of course Mr. Caridius is a politician. Didn't you see how the police chased the other man off and put him up to make a speech?"

The girl gave a small uneasy nod.

"Yes, I saw that. . . ." She lowered her voice. "I wanted to ask, does . . . did . . . would he have anything to do with . . ." she looked carefully at Miss Stott, wrinkled her brow and finished almost in a whisper . . . "with . . . Joe?"

"Joe?" repeated Miss Stott, automatically imitating her tone.

"Joe Canarelli?"

Miss Stott was at sea.

"Who is Joe Canarelli?"

"He is the agent for the Syrup Makers' Protective Union," explained the girl in a low tone.

"And how does Mr. Caridius come into that?"

"I wanted him to tell Joe Canarelli to . . . to lower the dues a little for Mamma . . . Mamma can't pay . . . they come due too often . . . and too much." She glanced around to see if she were being overheard by anyone.

Miss Stott was nonplussed.

"Don't all associations have regular dues on regular dates?"

"Why no, miss, Joe Canarelli, he . . . collects one day . . . next day he thinks of something else and comes again . . . he thinks of something next week and comes again. . . ."

"And just what did you expect Mr. Caridius to do about that?"

"Speak to Joe Canarelli . . . tell him to stop for a while."

"Where is this Joe Canarelli?" inquired Miss Stott with a disturbed feeling.

"He is in my mamma's shop now," explained the girl hastily. "I saw the speaking over here. I knew my mamma had let Mr. Caridius put his picture in her window, so I thought he might speak to Joe for her."

During this interval Caridius had concluded his philippic against graft, bribery and official corruption. Now he stepped down off his box and caught the end of the conversation. He inquired what was the matter.

"It's one of Canarelli's rackets," explained the lawyer briefly. "There's no use in our getting mixed up with that."

Caridius considered the situation.

"But the Independent Voters' Alliance means to correct such——"

"You are not in office yet," pointed out Myerberg. "You don't want to start a battle until you are equipped with arms."

"But wouldn't this be excellent publicity if we raised a disturbance about one of the old rackets?"

"Not at this moment," advised Myerberg. "You haven't got time to reach the people at large with your publicity, but the organization would learn it at once and would vote solidly against you. So you would just lose votes by any move you could make."

While the two men were discussing the political wisdom of taking any part in the Canarelli matter Miss Stott's sympathy was moved. She offered to go with the girl, and even

if she could do nothing she would at least understand the situation for some future campaign.

"But, listen," objected Myerberg, "there isn't anything to understand, it is just Canarelli's old syrup racket. It is on a par with the poultry racket, the dock laborers' racket, the fish racket. All the details are perfectly well known. The trouble you will have in some future political campaign is to prove them; and the obstacle back of that is to find a magistrate whom you could prove them before."

"I'll be part of the proof if I see it," said Miss Stott, moving away with the girl.

"But say . . . wait," called out Myerberg earnestly, "it isn't so safe, being part of the proof."

Miss Stott waived the warning casually and started on with the girl. She had heard, of course, of the violences of the underworld, but only vaguely and without detail, because such news always appeared in the tabloid papers which a person of her taste did not read. And besides, underworld melodrama never happened to people of her class. There was a kind of buffer middle world which protected her upper world from such annoyances. So now she went on with her companion down the crowded street and turned into an alley with a feeling resembling that of an American entering a foreign country with her passport comfortably visaed by the consul.

An Italian boy standing near the mouth of the mean thoroughfare asked in an ordinary tone:

"Paula, you're not running her in on this act?"

"Yes I am," returned Miss Stott's companion uncertainly.

"She can't do any good."

"She was with a politician the cops let speak down on Heyward Street."

The youth looked at Miss Stott out of eyes as dark as those of the girl.

"The Big Shot won't like it."

"Of course he won't like it if she stops him."

As the two walked on Miss Stott asked curiously:

"Who was that?"

"My brother, Angelo Estovia."

This brought a barely sensible tang of relief to Miss Stott, for a flicker had gone through her mind that the youth had been an outer guard of the racketeers, but if he were Paula's brother of course he was . . .

Her inner remarks to herself were interrupted by Paula's coming to a halt before the door of a small shop which exhaled the odor of boiling sugar. A heavy middle-aged Italian woman and a small foppishly dressed man stood talking in the entrance of the shop. Neither paid any attention to the girl and the American woman. The small man was repeating in an even unstressed tone:

"But the dues are twenty-five dollars for a cart."

The large woman replied in a voice no louder than the man's, but it shook beneath its restraint:

"But I paid you twelve dollars last week."

"That was for the pots. You have four pots . . ." he moved about the entrance and pointed in at them . . . "four . . . you pay dues according to your equipment . . . that's fair to every member."

"Listen," said the old woman, "I have only thirty dollars in my shop. You don't want me to go out of business, do you? Will that get you anything? I can't run my business on five dollars."

The small man frowned.

"Mrs. Estovia, I have got to be square. The Syrup Manufacturers' Protective Alliance places a charge of twenty-five dollars on every cart a manufacturer uses. I have got to be square. If I let you off, how could I face the next member? I can't say, 'Sometimes I let 'em off, sometimes I collect.' My whole organization would fall down. I can't tell him a lie. I must be honest. I wish I could help you, but you see how it is with me."

"Mr. Canarelli," interrupted the girl Paula, "this lady is from the Big Stick."

The small man turned to Miss Stott in a kind of immobile surprise.

"Krauseman . . . send a skirt . . . down here?"

The Italian girl batted her dark eyes.

"It's election day . . . the women have votes."

"Yes . . . I know that," nodded the small man, studying the two young women.

"My mother there has a vote," pointed out the girl, pursuing her nebulous clue.

"See here, Paula, you haven't been running to the Big Stick with complaints about me?"

"My mother and I have votes," retorted the girl sharply, "we can ask anything we please for our votes. You can settle with the Big Stick anyway you want to?"

"Yes, but how do I know——"

"This person, this lady is with the man that the Big Stick's sound truck is ballyhooing for some sort of office!"

"Are you?" asked the foppish little man uncertainly.

Miss Stott had a disagreeable sense of entering some sort of wide intangible maze. She was half minded to withdraw entirely. She was afraid she would get the Estovias into still deeper trouble. However, she answered by sticking strictly to the facts:

"I asked Mr. Krauseman for the sound truck for my candidate, and he let me have it."

"Who is your candidate?"

"Mr. Caridius."

"Is the Big Stick going to elect Mr. Caridius?"

"That I don't know," said Miss Stott. "He let me have the sound truck for him."

"Mm . . . m . . . of course you wouldn't know," agreed the small man thoughtfully. He stood pondering the matter, weighing connections which Miss Stott could not guess. Finally he turned to Mrs. Estovia.

"You know that I cannot collect smaller dues for a cart from you than from anyone else, but I can let you pay in

installments . . . ten dollars now; next week the rest; but I can't just walk away with nothing, not even for the Big Stick."

The Italian woman turned her back and lifted her petticoat to get at her great leg. She produced a ten-dollar bill which Mr. Canarelli took. The little man glanced again at Miss Stott and Paula Estovia, touched his hat and disappeared down the alley.

A number of thoughts moved through the political worker's mind. One was that the tabloids had grossly exaggerated the melodrama of the racketeers. It was not melodramatic, it was . . . verminous, this quiet businesslike blackmail.

"What was that for?" she asked when Mr. Canarelli was out of hearing.

"He says protection," said Mrs. Estovia, "and I am grateful, miss, I'll light a candle for you."

"Protection from what?"

"Breaking my bottles, turning over my barrels, smashing my windows."

"But don't the police owe you this protection?"

The old Italian syrup maker shrugged a heavy shoulder.

"The police," she said.

"Have you asked the police to protect you?"

The large woman looked intently at the political amateur.

"Did you really come from the Big Stick?" she inquired skeptically.

"Why no, I don't. I went to him this morning and asked for his sound wagon. He let me have it; that's all there is to it."

"You don't talk as if you come from the Big Stick."

"Just what I have told you, that's all. . . . Say, why don't you complain to the police when toughs break your windows and smash your barrels? Why do you go to Canarelli?"

The woman compressed her lips and shrugged.

Miss Stott turned to the daughter.

"Well, good-bye, my name is Stott . . . Cornelia Stott. I hope I did you some good."

"Oh, Miss Stott, you save my mother."

"I live on Shelvin Street. I'm the secretary of the Independent Voters' Alliance. If I can do anything else for you . . ."

The girl was very grateful; she took Miss Stott's hand and kissed it.

As the amateur political worker went back up the alley to the crowded street she grew angrier and angrier at what she had seen. She had a feeling for the Estovias. She wished she could brush the filthy insect of a Canarelli out of their shop. The idea that he should come up and almost hypocritically blackmail Mrs. Estovia while he gabbled about wanting to do her a favor . . . The girl clenched her fists; symbolically, around the little man's neck.

On the corner she saw the officer whom Myerberg had called O'Sheen. She went up to him with compressed lips and her nostrils slightly distended.

O'Sheen became immediately attentive because this was the girl whom Myerberg had reported as having some connection with the Big Stick. He did not know exactly what connection, but some.

"Mr. O'Sheen," asked the girl tensely, "do you know a man by the name of Canarelli?"

"Canarelli . . . Joe Canarelli . . . do I?"

"Yes, Joe Canarelli."

"Why sure."

"Do you know Mrs. Estovia who makes syrup back up . . ." she looked at the sign . . . "Duggers Alley?"

"Yes, I know her and Miss Paula and Angelo."

"Well, Canarelli has collected twenty-two dollars off of Mrs. Estovia in the last week. He got ten dollars of it today . . . I saw it paid over."

O'Sheen's face lighted. He touched his fingers to his cap in salute.

"Thank ye, miss. I don't say as I'll iver be able to hand the favor back to ye. You must be closter to the Big Stick than me, but if ye iver should need a frind in this game . . ." he saluted again . . . "there's Dinnis O'Sheen."

4

WHEN MISS STOTT returned to the place where Caridius had made his speech she found Myerberg in the act of departing for his law office. He was saying that he supposed the Independent Voters' Alliance would be listening to the election returns over the radio. The candidate regarded his new constituent quizzically.

"Look here, Myerberg, you have a notion that I may win this election?"

"Playing a hunch," nodded the lawyer.

"And you bet seven hundred and fifty dollars on your hunch?"

"I always back my hunches."

"You are a logical fellow, why do you do that?"

The lawyer considered a moment.

"When the first animal in the course of evolution developed the first eye in the world, don't you imagine its companions stood around and said, 'You are a logical fellow, why do you think you see anything?' "

Miss Stott began smiling.

"You are not only an idealist, I'm afraid you're a mystic."

Here the conversation was interrupted by newsboys yodeling along the street:

"Mystery Bomb Discovered!" "Infernal Machine Planted by Munitions Strikers!" "Explosives Used by Reds in Munitions Plant!"

Caridius signaled one of the boys, and all three of the companions, lawyer and politician and the masculine Miss Stott, purchased papers. The politician ran his eye through the columns:

"Wonder why they think the reds did it."

"Because the boy sold us a labor paper," explained the Jew. "A conservative paper would think the strikers did it, and a radical paper would think the police had framed it, trying to fasten it on the reds."

"Look here, that's over in the Eighth Ward. I'm going over there and make a speech and say I think the reds did it. I might get some of the men to vote for me."

"Sure, and remember to make another speech to the strike breakers and tell them you think the strikers did it. Then everybody will see that you are a man of penetration and that you really belong in Congress."

Caridius laughed, lifted a hand at the irrepressible Myerberg and set out for the Eighth Ward. Miss Stott elected to return with Myerberg, so the politician made his way alone. As he went along he glanced at his paper again to see if it contained any details of the attempted sabotage which he could twist into an argument that the strike breakers had planted the bomb. He thought how he would handle his speech, strongly argue that it was not the strikers and faintly suggest that it was their enemies the strike breakers. This he felt to be perfectly proper because the bomb found in the munitions plant had no political bearing, and speeches were designed to gain adherents.

As he moved along toward the munitions plant concocting an extemporaneous address a voice called his name. Caridius came to his surroundings and found himself in a street composed of the monotonous rows of houses occupied by the munitions plant's employees. Near one of these houses stood a man who appeared vaguely familiar and whom he

was uncomfortably certain he ought to know. Then, just as he was drawing breath to screen his embarrassment by using the pronoun "you" and atoning for his ignorance by an excess of cordiality, he really did recall the fellow's name. He ejaculated in a great relief which he metamorphosed into a semblance of strong friendliness:

"Well I'll be damned, if it isn't Jim Essary!"

"Sure," smiled Essary, gratified, shifting a paper sack from his right to his left side in order to shake hands.

"Why, I haven't seen you since . . . since we were in school together. I had no idea you were in this city!" Caridius said all this in the warm empty voice with which one renews a college acquaintance.

"I'm in the research laboratory over at the Rump-Mu," explained Essary.

Sure enough his old college friend's fingers were stained and his eyes a little reddened.

"Rump-Mu . . . what's that?"

"The Rumbourg-Nordensk Munitions and Arms Company."

"Oh, of course . . . the plant . . . so you're in their research department . . . well I swear . . . must be a great life, really to get down to science . . . research . . . advance the frontiers of human knowledge . . ."

"Mm . . . mm . . . yes," agreed the chemist without enthusiasm.

"How you getting on with 'em?"

"Well . . . I'm with 'em."

Caridius surveyed his college acquaintance with concern.

"You don't like it?"

Mr. Essary leaned down with his paper sack and placed it gently on the ground.

"Oh yes, sure I like it . . . I'm working on the constitution of the atom now."

Caridius gave the slow understanding nod of a layman who knows nothing of what an initiate is saying.

"Well, that must be gratifying . . . constitution of the

atom . . . yes, it must be gratifying indeed. Well, I certainly am glad to have seen you, and we've got to look each other up," said Caridius, repeating the formula which meant that they probably would not see each other again for another ten years.

"Look here, I have a small private laboratory right around the corner here where I live," said Essary with the slow but growing warmth of a lonely man. "If you have time I'd like to show you what I'm doing."

"Why no-o, I don't suppose I'll have time, I'm going over to the plant to see some men. . . . I wish I did have time. . . . How long you been here, anyway?"

"Ever since I got out of college."

Caridius opened his mouth in genuine amazement.

"My God, you don't mean it . . . damn near all your life!"

"Yep, right here in the Rump-Mu." Essary gave his rather frayed laugh.

"It's unbelievable. What an ocean this city is! Why you have more chance of meeting a person . . . just running up on him in the state of Texas than you've got in this town."

"I don't know," criticized Essary seriously, "you would have to compare the population of this town with, say, the number of square acres in Texas to reach some probable proportion. . . . I don't know how it would work out."

Essary's seriousness brought Caridius back to the serious business he himself had in hand.

"Say, Essary, can you vote in this election?"

"Yes, I can."

"You've registered!" ejaculated the politician in surprise.

"Yes, I have."

"Well, go to the polls and vote for me."

"What are you running for?"

"Congress. I'm running against old man Blanke who's been in Congress for eighteen or twenty years. You know he's a machine man, controlled by the financiers. I say it's

time the middle-class people in this state and nation expressed themselves: people who place the good of their country above money; mainly because they haven't got any money."

Essary was nodding, apparently following Caridius sympathetically, but actually he was thinking with a kind of drab satisfaction that Caridius had failed to live up to his prospects just as he himself had done. Here Caridius was a politician, one of those indefinite persons who deserts his work, or whose work deserts him, and who runs for an office.

Caridius was continuing his set plea:

"We need a representative in Congress to represent us ordinary men. You can't expect a wealthy man to do that. Take the Rumbourgs for instance. How would it be possible for a member of a multimillionaire family to place his country's welfare before his money?"

"They can't of course," nodded Essary with the vacuity with which an outsider always follows a set sales talk.

"All right, now, what good does a country, I mean that political entity called a nation, what good does it do?"

"Well . . . er . . . ah . . . it does . . ."

"It is supposed to serve the best interests of the majority of the people, isn't it?"

"Yes, that's it," agreed Essary, pleased to have been relieved of the burden of answering the question.

"Well now, the best interest of the majority of the people is not the best interest of that 10 per cent of our people who possess 90 per cent of our national wealth. On the other hand, the very position the financiers hold suggests that their interests are the very antithesis of the interests of the common people. And it is against public policy for a handful of such men to run our country for their own benefit. That is why I am offering myself as a candidate. I belong to nobody; I belong to no party. I cannot conscientiously join either party because the two major parties are just the same thing . . . the plutocrats running their left hands against their right hands to see which will be elected. I say

put in a man like me, an independent who doesn't belong to either side."

"Do you really think you will win?" asked the chemist.

Caridius decided to drop his set speech and be truthful.

"Well, I didn't hope to at first. I was simply running, trying to make a show so one of the old parties would take me up, but a Jew lawyer whom I know came to me today and said he had a hunch I would win."

Essary nodded in agreement.

"Subconscious cerebration."

"That your definition of a hunch?"

"Yes."

"You believe in 'em?"

"Why, I believe all thinking is a hunch. I mean by that that no man can think he is thinking and think."

"Why no-o . . ." agreed Caridius uncertainly.

"That means that all the deeper mental processes are completely removed from observation and surveillance. We have no idea what took place in our heads, we simply arrive at a conclusion."

"Ye-es. . . ."

"Well . . . that's a hunch. And I believe in them because there isn't anything else to believe in."

Caridius abandoned the technical end of this question for its practical side.

"Then do you too believe I'll be elected?"

"I think the Jew thinks you'll be elected."

"Oh well . . . I . . . I knew that."

The two acquaintances were once more about to part, each with the private knowledge that he would never look the other one up again. Essary stooped for his bundle but stood up before he reached it and stopped Caridius, who was about to move away.

"Look here," said the scientist with a certain degree of earnestness which he had not shown before, "if you should get to Congress, would . . . er . . . do you suppose you could change the patent laws?"

"How?" asked Caridius curiously.

"Well . . . patents . . . patent rights . . . there oughtn't to be any such things any more."

Caridius stared.

"My God, man, that from you, an inventor?"

"Yes, me, an inventor. Who were the patent laws meant to protect?"

"Why, you inventors, of course," hastened Caridius.

"Yes, but patent laws have stopped doing that," said Essary. "The men who do the inventing nowadays are all employees of some corporation. They are all bought up, like commodities, which they are. Anything they invent belongs to their owners, not to them. All they ever get out of their inventions are just their regular monthly wages and one dollar for each invention they patent."

"Even if their inventions are worth millions of dollars, that's all they get?"

"Why, certainly: the man who invents a machine gets just a little more than the man who runs it."

Caridius was tempted, of course, to follow the custom of candidates and promise a terrific fist and skull fight against any and all wrongs a voter desired to have righted, but a certain consideration for the fact that he and Essary really had been schoolmates tempered his impulse toward practical electioneering.

"Look here," he said baldly, "corporations have a right to hire scientists just the same as they have the right to hire any other class of men."

"Sure, sure, I know that, but my point is that the patent laws were meant to protect the inventors. They have quit doing that. In fact, they work at a different angle entirely and are now used to oppress the public."

A suspicion flickered through Caridius' mind that Essary had gone insane.

"They do what?"

"Oppress the public, but they do it negatively."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean the financiers buy up some of the greatest and most beneficent inventions and retire them from the market, never allow them to be used, because they compete with some property they are already selling. That's why I say there should be no patents, or a patent should expire unless it was placed on the market in a year or two. . . . I don't know what should be done, but, by God, Caridius, you know it isn't right for a small group of men to use all the brains of America for their own advantage, and completely suppress the product of American brains if it doesn't happen to jibe with their bank accounts."

"Look here," protested Caridius, "why do inventors enter into any such bargain?"

Essary made the gesture of a man hopeless of making another understand.

"How could a young scientist just out of college hope to accumulate a research laboratory even as complete as that of the college he studied in, much less the endlessly refined laboratories that the great corporations build? And how could one lone experimenter compete with a corps of trained men all centered on a given problem and perfectly sure to solve it in a half-dozen different ways? No, the corporations have the machines of science exactly as they have the machines of industry, and they simply hire men to run them."

Caridius drew down his lips in doubtful reflection.

"Well, what would you suggest doing?"

Essary flared up.

"I would make the product of a man's brains as inalienable as his liberty!"

"Well, brain and brawn, there's not much difference between them, they are the two natural endowments bestowed on men by nature; why not make the product of brawn as inalienable as liberty?"

"Hell, brains have always been rated above muscle!"

Caridius considered his old acquaintance narrowly.

"Look here, Essary . . . what have you invented that it hurts you so to turn over to your company?"

"Me! Why do you think I have invented anything?"

Caridius laughed.

"Because men don't get as worked up as you are over abstractions."

Essary considered a moment and then, without knowing anything at all about the present Henry Caridius, but merely because he had met him in college, he admitted:

"Well, yes, I have got something. . . . I wish you'd just step around the corner to my laboratory. . . ."

Caridius put up a palm sharply.

"The devil, no, I can't do that. Right now I should be at the munitions plant. I didn't realize how long I was talking."

"Well, listen, stop by on your way back."

"All right, I'll try to do that."

"Then I'll see you later." Essary picked up his package very carefully.

"What is that thing?" inquired the politician.

"Why, it's that bomb they found over in the plant. If it had gone off, all this section of——"

"The hell it is!" cried Caridius backing away.

"Here, that's all right . . . no danger . . . this is a very amateurish contrivance. The police wanted to take it out and drop it in the bay, but I wanted to take it apart and look it over."

Caridius was still moving backwards.

"Well, you'll be through with it before I come back to see you, won't you?"

"Oh, certainly, I'll have it stripped down in ten minutes after I get it in my laboratory."



5

AS THE POLITICIAN pursued his way to the munitions plant the thought of Jim Essary taking apart the bomb preyed on his mind. The fact that the career and ambition of his old schoolmate had come to a dead end through social maladjustment did not at all disturb the candidate for the high post of member of Congress. In fact it was subtly but unacknowledgedly pleasant to Caridius that Essary had not got along with the actual realities of life perhaps so well as he himself had. And as for the inventor's complaints about the social set-up, thousands were echoing that; it was merely the yapping of the hindmost hounds. But for an old schoolmate of his to be at that moment taking to pieces an infernal machine that might explode at any moment, that worried Caridius; it made him jumpy.

When he reached the munitions plant with the strikers on the outside of its high board palisade and the strike breakers on the inside, Caridius first went around among the strikers and assured them that he was against capital, against the exploitation of labor, and that if the men would vote for him he would introduce labor legislation that would shorten their hours and increase their pay.

Then, through his connection with Krauseman's sound wagon, the cordon of police permitted him to go into the plant. There he told the strike breakers that he favored the good old American doctrine that a man had a right to work

when he pleased, where he pleased and for what he pleased. And that if they would elect him to Congress he would introduce legislation curbing the tyranny and anarchy of the labor unions, and he would throw the labor market open to every honest workingman to compete for work at the prices he saw fit to offer. He grew quite eloquent on this point, harking back to the courageous and individualistic founders of the American commonwealth and assuring the strike breakers that the same red blood that was shed for independence in seventeen seventy-six, still flowed in their own veins today.

In fact, Caridius found this division of his audience into watertight compartments outside and inside a high board fence picketed with deputies a very convenient arrangement indeed from the point of view of practical politics.

When the noon whistle blew Caridius departed from the plant with a warm feeling that he had actually accomplished some good in his cause. Then, when the ardor of his oratory had somewhat subsided, there returned to him his uneasiness about Essary's bomb. He wondered how Essary was getting along. With a kind of sober quip he reflected that by this time Essary had disassembled the bomb or the bomb had disassembled Essary. He wanted to know which.

With a certain apprehension the politician retraced his way to Essary's laboratory. As he drew near the place he looked ahead, and since there were no houses razed among the monotonous rows of residences he decided that the chemist had come out all right. He paused at the door and rang the bell, thinking that he would not stop in at all but would just ask about the bomb and then go ahead.

Caridius was rather surprised when a woman opened the door. He did not know exactly when or why, but somehow or other he had formed the impression that Essary was a bachelor. Now he was forced to inquire formally if Mr. Essary was at home. When the woman said that he was and continued to hold open the door for Caridius to enter, the politician explained a little awkwardly:

"Well, I just dropped by to see how he had come out with that bomb."

"Bomb!" ejaculated the woman sharply. "Where did you come from . . . the plant?"

"Yes," nodded Caridius.

"What's your name?"

"Caridius . . . Henry Caridius."

"Just wait a minute and I'll see." She closed the door quite solidly in Caridius' face, and he could hear her walking rapidly away from the entrance.

The politician blinked and stood trying to construe this odd conduct into something rational. If Essary had blown himself up undoubtedly the woman would have known it. Still, she may have come in late, and Essary already could have killed himself . . . or she may have been deaf and wouldn't have heard the explosion. . . . None of these explanations seemed to fit. . . . Just then he heard laughter. The door opened again, and Essary came out.

"Come on in," he waved heartily.

"No, I was just passing and I wanted to know if you came out all right with that bomb?"

"Of course I did. I took it apart hours ago. . . . Uh, Miss Saylor, may I present my old college friend Mr. Henry Caridius? Miss Saylor helps me here in the laboratory."

There were bows and howdydos, and Miss Saylor, who was smiling and whose face was flushed, said:

"You must excuse the way I ran off and left you just then, but when you said you were from the munitions plant and asked about the bomb I got it crossed in my head for a moment and thought you had asked about powder."

"Powder?" repeated Caridius curiously.

"That's a long story," dismissed Essary, laughing in his turn. "Come on back to my laboratory."

"I haven't got time," declined the politician positively, "I just wanted to see whether you were alive or not, and since I'm here, have you voted for me as you said you would?"

Essary became apologetic.

"Well no, I haven't, I haven't registered."

"I thought you told me this morning you had registered."

"Well I did, but when I came back here and asked Rose about it I found out I registered year before last but not this year. I felt bad about it. I hoped I would see you again. I wanted to explain it."

"Oh well, it's all right. I'm not going to be elected anyway."

The woman, who was tall, dark and personable, even with acid-stained hands, looked at Caridius in surprise.

"Then what are you running for?"

"Can you vote? Have you registered?"

"No, I don't take any interest in politics."

"Well, since I can't lose a vote on you either way I can tell you my formal or my informal reason for running for Congress. Which do you want?"

The chemist's assistant began smiling and became not only personable but pretty.

"I think I'll have both, please."

"All right, the formal first. Now you didn't register, you are not interested in politics, you say. I assume you are a middle-class person about on a plane with me and Essary. Now what is the result of millions of middle-class people like me and you not voting? Why, we are the nation . . . or at least we think we are. We feel that labor is working for us and that capital is arranging things for us, while as a matter of fact neither one of those groups is interested in us at all. They are working for themselves, of course. Every tiniest divisible part of America is working for itself and for nobody else. That's the way we do; it's our rule; it's what America is."

Both Essary and the girl had ceased laughing, and the girl stood nodding her head faintly to Caridius' arguments.

"All right, then what should we do? The middle class should organize. We should get together. Essary, here, is in some sort of jam about his invention. . . ."

"Yes, that's what I thought you were talking about when

you came to the door and mentioned a bomb," interlined Miss Saylor. "I thought somebody at the plant had learned about it and had come out to look into the matter."

"All right, there you are, a case in point. Now I am getting up an Independent Voters' Alliance to raise the issues for ordinary people, who are neither workmen nor financiers nor manufacturers. As an independent candidate for Congress I offer myself to the people as a man upon whom the two great capitalistic parties of the country have no strings or pulls. I'm absolutely free, and I'll serve the middle-class people whom I represent to the best of my ability. That's my formal reason."

"Yes," agreed the girl seriously, "and what's your informal one?"

"Why, my informal one is, I want to make a good enough showing in this election so that one of the two great capitalistic parties will take me up and put strings on me and shackle me with party obligations and finally send me to Congress . . . I want the job."

Caridius meant both of his listeners to laugh; Essary did laugh. Miss Saylor stared with a shocked face.

"No, no, not really."

"Why yes," nodded Caridius, becoming quite sober himself, "that's the shortest cut to office. If you get in the machine and try to work up it takes you years; if you can get an outside following, sometimes they take you up."

"But aren't you going to stand for—for just the people?"

"Why no . . . certainly not . . . I'd never get anywhere. They don't vote. There is no way for just the people to inform themselves, they have no newspapers, no radios. They don't even register so they can vote if they should find a candidate. They are not interested. No, the only way to get to office is to be taken up by the organized rich or the organized poor, and I hope, in my simple way, that this will happen to me, because, as I say, I need the job."

"Mm—mm," agreed Miss Saylor briefly but eloquently.

There was a pause, then Essary interrupted:

"But look here, I didn't invite Caridius here to talk platitudes, I want to show him something in the laboratory and ask his advice."

The three walked back and entered a long laboratory of which about one half was filled with chemicals and chemical paraphernalia and the other half with electrical apparatus.

Essary led the way to the chemical end of the laboratory, and Caridius followed, uncomfortably aware, as he went, of the impression that he had made on Miss Saylor.

Essary picked up a vial of gray stuff.

"It's about this powder here," he said pouring some out on a piece of white paper and spreading it with his finger.

Caridius looked at it and saw that it was composed of small grains of intricate and symmetrical shapes, like snow crystals.

"What about the powder?" he asked, looking up at Essary.

"Well . . . it's a moral question," admitted Essary.

Caridius nodded with a foreshadowing of what was to come.

"That powder is an explosive," said Essary, "and I think it is the most violent explosive in existence at the present time."

"But that isn't the moral point of it?" suggested Caridius.

"No, no," agreed Essary in an aside, and then went on with the technical end in which he was interested: "The reason it is so efficient is not its chemical formula, it's the shape of the grains. You know the shock of powder depends upon the speed of its explosion," explained the scientist.

"Ye-es," agreed Caridius who knew nothing about it.

Essary understood his manner to mean no, so he repeated:

"Yes, the shock of powder depends upon the speed of its combustion. For instance, if I push you, you are not hurt, but if I use the same amount of force in a sudden blow you are knocked down."

"Mm-mm, I see that."

"An explosive works the same way. The formula is roughly, S equals E over T , or that is the shock equals the energy divided by the time. I believe the square root of T would come nearer to precision; but the point is, if you reduce the time to zero you step up the shock to infinity . . . you see that, don't you?"

Caridius had memories of school algebra with equations containing zero and infinity. He remembered these two symbols had a habit of traveling together, so he agreed to this.

"It is distinctly a war powder," added Essary.

"I see it would be," assented the politician.

"Now here is my moral point on the matter," proceeded Essary seriously.

"How did you get it into such fanciful shapes?" interposed Caridius curiously.

"Why, I copied the mechanics of snowflakes. . . . Now here is what I would really like to have your opinion on. . . . I feel the powder ought to be an American military property."

"Why yes, certainly," ejaculated Caridius, looking at Essary in surprise.

"Jim . . . uh . . . I don't believe I'd go into that," observed Miss Saylor in a quiet tone.

The politician was subtly hurt. He understood that the girl was dubious of him because he had just admitted to her frankly that he approached politics in a practical manner. He thought to himself, with a touch of bitterness, that his very frankness should have shown her that personally he was an upright man.

Essary held up a hand to quiet his helper.

"Now I worked this process out by myself here in this laboratory. But still, when I went with the Rump-Mu ten years ago, I signed, of course, the general agreement to turn over to the company everything I produced during my term of employment with them."

"I would have guessed that by what you told me before," nodded Caridius, looking at the girl.

"But I do think and feel that the United States should have the exclusive use of this powder. This nation is not going to remain at peace with the world forever, Caridius. All the battleships and fighting planes and poison gas we're developing . . . they are not meant purely for shadow boxing."

"No, of course they aren't."

"And while powder of all sorts may be as obsolete as bows and arrows when the time comes, then again, maybe they won't, and if they aren't, we want the best powder in the world, which at the present moment is what you see in that vial."

"I myself don't see why our government shouldn't have a monopoly on your——"

"If it were mine, it would have it, but it isn't mine, it belongs to the Rump-Mu."

"Even then, why can't the government have it?"

"Because the company would want to sell it to all the other nations. They would want to make money out of it. They may preach preparedness and patriotism very loudly, which they do, but their business is to make money."

"Yes, naturally," agreed Caridius who understood this situation perfectly.

"And besides, this plant is under a trade agreement with the Compagnie Ladalier-Dubillesse in France to share their developments in explosives, and I simply don't want any other country to have this powder."

The thought of these great munitions companies with their international spheres of influence, produced in Caridius a feeling of romance which somehow discounted the realities of any future war.

"I think I see how your moral question arises out of this situation," nodded the politician soberly.

"It's a rationalization," interrupted Miss Saylor crisply, "purest case of it I ever heard of."

"Why no, no it isn't," protested Essary. "I really feel

something about my country. I suppose it sounds silly, Caridius, but I do."

"No, no, it doesn't sound silly," assured the politician absently. "What is it you want to do?"

"My idea was," said Essary slowly, "to patent the method of making this powder under another name and offer it directly to the War Department."

"That would be a breach of contract," analyzed Caridius, "if I apprehend rightly the terms you made with the plant here."

"I think it would be embezzlement," interrupted Miss Saylor.

"How do you make it that?" inquired Caridius with a desire to set himself right with the girl.

"Because Jim's invention belongs to the plant at this very moment. Now if he sells it somewhere else, wouldn't that be embezzlement?"

"No, no, you couldn't make anything worse than breach of contract out of that. . . . I suppose you are against his doing this thing?"

"No, no, I'm not," answered Miss Saylor to the politician's surprise, "but I say, put it down for what it is. It isn't patriotism, it's acquisitiveness . . . and irritation. Jim feels that the Rump-Mu caught him in the web of its contract when he was young and idealistic, and, of course, poor, which he still is. He feels they haven't done him right, and now, if he can sidestep his contract and make some money, he wants to do it."

"Look here, which side of this question are you on anyway?" inquired Caridius.

"Neither, but I want Jim to decide it on its realities. Does he want to risk his reputation for a chance at a million, or does he want to keep his reputation and continue to draw his eighty-seven dollars a week? I merely want him to leave the American flag out of his problem so he can make a clear-cut decision one way or the other. I don't want him to regret afterwards what he has done if he tries this plan and fails."

Caridius was shocked at such sentiments from Miss Saylor.

"But look here," he protested, "I think Jim's right. A man's country is supposed to stand before any personal considerations."

Essary was encouraged.

"Why, certainly, that's true. Rose doesn't seem to comprehend that what I feel for our nation really is back of my whole idea."

"I see your point thoroughly," nodded Caridius.

"And you think it should be offered to the War Department first?"

"I think a man's country ought to come ahead of any personal risk he might take."

"There you are," nodded Essary at Rose, "that's what another man thinks."

"I see it is," agreed the girl dryly.

"Well, that's that," said the inventor in relief. "Now, Caridius, before you go I've got to show you another little device of mine. . . ." He led the way to the electrical end of the laboratory. He came to a little glass mounting which supported a coil of wire in the form of a tube or a little cannon. "You recall what I said to you a moment ago, Caridius, about the possibility of all kinds of powder becoming obsolete?"

The politician took a sudden interest in the contrivance before him.

"You don't mean to say this is going to oust powder . . ."

"Don't know . . . hope so . . . there is no doubt that powder is going to be discarded eventually. I would be happy indeed if I could be the man who delivered its coup de grâce . . . uh . . . have we got another mouse, Rose?"

"Yes, we have another mouse," said the girl in a faintly disapproving tone.

"Would you mind putting it up?"

Miss Saylor went to a locker and brought back a small cage containing a single white mouse. She placed it about a

yard away from the electrical gun and then walked to the other end of the laboratory.

"She can't stand to see me kill a mouse," explained Essary in an aside.

The politician became intensely interested in the experiment before him. He looked at the little gun, then at the mouse in the cage, with the feeling that the stage was set for a lilliputian tragedy.

"Just stand behind me," directed Essary. "I don't know how wide an angle the variable vibrations take in."

"Would it hurt me?"

"I doubt it, this is such a little model, probably wouldn't be good for you."

Caridius stepped behind the inventor and watched intently. The mouse was moving back and forth in its cage. When Essary pressed a button the little animal stopped and stood looking at the two men.

Caridius was almost drolly disappointed. He really had expected something.

"I believe the mouse felt something," said Caridius in a slightly consoling voice. "It made him stop to look at us."

Essary began laughing.

"No, I don't think it did."

"But it stopped him."

"Yes, it stopped him, but I don't believe he felt anything. You see these irregular vibrations throw all the molecules out of order, but they don't disturb the creature's balance at all. I have often imagined an army stopped like that in a charge, all stopped like sculpture. . . ."

From the back of the room Miss Saylor called in the monotone women use on such occasions:

"Is it dead?"

"Yes . . . you can come on back," replied Essary.

6

AS HENRY LEE CARIDIUS returned to his apartment his thoughts swung away from the current election which was vital to his future and hovered about Rose Saylor and the miniature sinisterness of the electric gun. He tried to calculate his probable votes in the plant, but there slipped into his mind the mouse pausing to gaze at the toy gun . . . apparently just stopping to look. . . . As he thought about it there grew in Caridius a nightmarish feeling as if he were a tiny soldier marching with a tiny but multitudinous army across a yard-wide zone where the whole pigmy host would abruptly cease to be. . . . That would be world suicide. . . . There would have to be some arrangement made to abolish wars.

A sudden access of irony seized Caridius that Rose Saylor should so have contemned his plan to get himself taken up by one of the major political parties while she herself assisted Jim Essary in assembling the almost hypnotic horror of his new engine. . . . That was like a woman . . . unjust . . . unreasonable. . . . He wondered by what kind of arrangement Essary and Miss Saylor worked together in the laboratory. . . . She was a very attractive girl when she was not mounted on her moral charger. . . .

When Caridius reached the Albemarle Apartments he replaced his mind on the election, perhaps for the undefined reason that he considered this to be the loyal and safest mental attitude in which to approach his wife. He walked

through the lobby and let himself into his apartment on the first floor, calling his wife's name.

He found her in the kitchenette setting some icebox cakes in the mechanical refrigerator.

"Ellora," he began in a voice edged with enthusiasm now that he had begun to think of the election, "I really believe I have a chance . . . that sound wagon Connie Stott got from——"

Ellora swung about.

"You've been out with her all morning, then come in talking about her for lunch!"

Caridius blinked and got his bearings.

"Why, I haven't been out with her all morning. . . ."

At this point the telephone rang; Ellora became more indignant.

"There she is now, she has telephoned you twice within the last hour."

"Well, there you are," cried the politician, seizing on this point, "if she telephoned me that proves I wasn't with her."

"Well go on, go on, see what she wants."

"You see it proves it, don't you?"

"Who have you been with all morning long?"

"Why, Jim Essary, an old school friend of mine."

"I mean what woman: you've been with some woman."

"Why, I haven't, I . . . " He thought of Rose Saylor, boggled a moment, then repeated that he hadn't been with any woman.

Ellora appraised her husband with a penetration for which he never could quite account.

"Well . . . who did you meet at Jim Essary's?"

"Why, Jim Essary. . . . I met Jim Essary at Jim Essary's, of course."

Ellora closed the refrigerator and flung out a hand.

"What . . . woman . . . did you meet at Jim Essary's?"

"Oh, yes . . . there was a girl there. . . . I believe her name was Saylor."

"Oh, oh, oh, what a man! Go answer the telephone. Rush now and talk to Connie Stott."

"Why, I don't care anything about Connie Stott. Let her——"

"Go on . . . I want to see what she wants!"

Ellora followed as Caridius went to the living room and took up the telephone.

"Henry Caridius talking."

Connie's voice came over the wire, sharp and brittle:

"Do you want to do a decent thing, Henry, and maybe swing enough votes to elect you?"

"Wouldn't it be too late in the day to swing many votes?" inquired Caridius, thinking of that end of the proposition.

"It will create such a sensation that every decent man who hasn't voted will go to the polls to vote for you."

"Well, my God, that will be nearly every decent man in town. . . . Shoot, what you got in mind?"

"Swear out a warrant against the Canarelli mob and arrest them!"

"What have they done . . . blackjacked some of our voters at the polls?"

"No, it's not an election fraud."

"Then what is it?"

"You know the Estovia family?"

"No."

"Well, they are syrup makers . . . that girl who came to us while you were speaking this morning, she was one of them."

"Yes?"

"Well, their shop's been looted, their pots smashed, and their hot syrup poured all over the floor!"

"My God, what an outrage! . . . And what do you want me to do?"

"Prosecute the scoundrels. You'd get thousands of votes from people who have to pay them blackmail."

"I suppose we might start a little flurry against them as a vote catcher."

"Why not land them in jail?" cried the secretary of the Independent Voters' Alliance.

"Why, the devil, Connie, you can't. Don't you realize Canarelli's got the police force and the city magistrates bought up and paid for?"

"Listen, I'm going to place a complaint against that devilish little Canarelli and——"

"Well, if you think it would help out in the votes . . ."

"And that double-crossing policeman, O'Sheen," concluded Miss Stott with vehemence.

"O'Sheen!"

"Yes."

"What's he got to do with it?"

"A good and plenty."

Caridius was bewildered.

"Look here, Connie, how did you come to know all this?"

"Why, Paula Estovia, that girl I was telling you about, she came to my apartment just a little while ago, crying and saying I had wrecked her mother's shop."

"You had wrecked her shop?"

"Yes . . . I!"

"How could you have?"

"Well, I . . . I really did, in a way. I went to O'Sheen and complained to him about Canarelli blackmailing the Estovias."

"Oh, I see. O'Sheen started trouble for Canarelli for blackmailing, and Canarelli came around and broke up everything the Estovias possessed?"

"Well, yes . . . that's about right . . . what O'Sheen did was to go to Canarelli and demand half of what he had collected from the Estovias . . . that was the trouble O'Sheen gave Canarelli . . . made him split his blackmail with him; and then Canarelli came back and wrecked the Estovia shop."

"Well I'll be damned . . . huh!"

"Listen, I'm going to lodge my complaint against both of

those men, then I'll come to your apartment and we'll plan what next to do!"

"Well . . . all right . . . I'll be waiting here for you."

Caridius hung up the receiver in a kind of daze.

Ellora began:

"Is that woman coming over here to see you another time today?"

Caridius disregarded this.

"Honey, Connie Stott has just got a family of syrup makers into the worst trouble. . . ."

"What did she do . . . run off with the man?"

"Oh, no, my heavens . . . no, she reported a case of blackmail to a policeman."

"Well, what is she going to come here for?"

"Why . . . er . . . to talk things over with me."

"What things does she have to talk over with you?"

"Why, Connie has a plan that may bring us a lot of votes."

"Us . . . you and she are not on a ticket together, are you?"

"Good Lord, no, I mean our party . . . me . . . bring me a lot of votes."

"Why couldn't some of the men have done that?"

Caridius spread out his hands.

"Because . . . the . . . men . . . didn't . . . know . . . it. And they would never have thought of it anyway. Everybody in Megapolis knows better than to try to start a suit against the racketeers and the police at the same time, but, my heavens, the very audacity of it . . . or rather ignorance. . . . If the late afternoon papers should toot that up, by George, it would bring me a bunch of votes. . . . Leave it to a fool woman to be kicking around among the pebbles and turn up a gold mine."

"Henry Caridius, are you praising or are you slandering Miss Stott?"

"Well, honey, a man's sincere thoughts about any woman are usually a mixture of both."

This annoyed Ellora but she let it pass.

"Just how is Connie Stott a gold mine?"

"She is making a complaint before some magistrate against Canarelli for blackmailing and against a policeman for blackmailing the blackmailer. Now of course that really is a terrible mess. Everybody understands it in a vague sort of way, but Connie has had a case happen under her very nose and she is furious about it. . . . I suppose every voter in Megapolis would be furious if they could only see what is really going on!"

"Why they read all about 'em in the papers!"

"I know it, but you see that's different: the papers are a kind of entertainment, and the worse tales they can tell, why really . . . to come right down to it . . . the better we like it. It's just like a show, we like them dramatic . . . we haven't even got good taste in our papers, we like them melodramatic. . . ." A dim philosophic flicker went through Caridius' head concerning the reciprocal action of public taste on the press and the press on public taste; the hordes of perfunctorily trained readers poured forth every year by the public schools and colleges . . . but of course Ellora was not interested in such divagations; in fact, she would not be able to follow them. Just here the doorbell rang.

Ellora was incensed anew.

"What does she mean by coming here so quick?" she whispered sharply.

"Well, she has to act fast, and I imagine she wanted to talk it over with me before she started anything. . . . Send the maid to the door and be nice to her."

Lula, the maid, was already on her way to the door. When she opened it the master and mistress of the apartment saw a policeman in the entrance. He wore a smile on his good-natured face, and when he saw Caridius he touched his cap.

"Governor," he said, "the Big Stick asks if you will come around to his place at your convaynience."

"The Big Stick?"

"The boss, Mr. Krauseman."

Caridius stood looking at the officer in blank surprise.

"You are . . . Officer O'Sheen?"

"Yis, sir."

A suspicion winked through Caridius' head that Connie Stott had filed her complaint and this was a plan to put him out of the way, but of course that was nonsense.

"Do you know what he wants?"

Officer O'Sheen lifted a shoulder.

"Naturally I don't know thot, sir." After a moment he added with a touch of the facetious, "After you have gone to see him, ye'll be a wise lad if you have found out yoursilf what he rarely wants."

Another hazard went through the politician's head that Krauseman and Congressman Blanke really had broken just as Myerberg had suspected. The remote possibility that Krauseman really intended to espouse his side excited Caridius and aroused the tenuous shadow of a very large and astonishing hope. He said to O'Sheen:

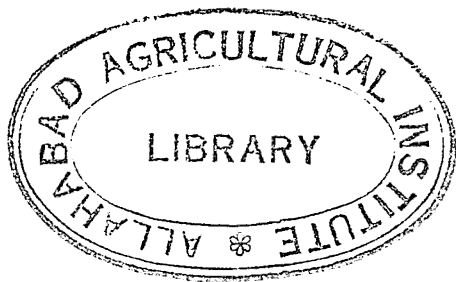
"I'll telephone Mr. Krauseman I'm coming."

"Oh no, I wouldn't telephone him, sir," advised the policeman hastily, "and besides, you won't get him . . . they tell me you have to make a date to telephone him, he hasn't got no bell on his set."

Caridius nodded.

"Well, I'll call a taxi and go over at once."

"I rode up here in a taxi myself," said O'Sheen. "I told the driver to wait outside. You can have it, sir, and I'll walk back to headquarters."



7

AS HIS TAXICAB moved and halted with the traffic, Mr. Henry Lee Caridius tried to imagine what earthly reason Krauseman could have in sending for him. He did not even know Krauseman. The Estovia incident about which Miss Stott had telephoned him suggested itself to Caridius' mind, but the politician did not believe that the political boss could have acted so swiftly. Why, the ink must hardly be dry on Miss Stott's complaint against Canarelli and O'Sheen. However, Caridius knew that all such matters would come before Krauseman for adjustment. The political boss was really the middleman between the officials of the law and the racketeers. And just here a reasonable explanation dawned on Caridius. A policeman had blackmailed a blackmailer. The racketeer had doubtless complained to Krauseman, and the Big Stick was sending for Caridius in a very quiet way to see what the politician knew about it. In other words Krauseman was taking evidence on the case. It was a kind of nonlegal court procedure designed to work out harmony if not justice among crooks.

Caridius' mind, however, was so wrought up that he did not stick at this reasonable solution but began nursing the idea that perhaps the publicity of the suit Miss Stott was beginning, had, after all, made it worth Krauseman's while to come to some arrangement with the Independent Voters' Alliance. As this was Caridius' most profitable point of

view he finally settled on this explanation as the true one.

The taxicab eventually stopped before a dignified old stone house facing a small city park filled with flowers and carefully trimmed trees.

When Caridius got out of his cab and started to pay his fare, the taxicab driver hesitated a moment, then shook his head.

"No, sir, that's all right, it's settled, sir," and he drove away without taking the money.

It impressed the politician. The beautiful square before the old stone building took on a moral aspect. There was something quietly imperial about the milieu. He was being summoned into the presence of one of the real rulers of America.

Caridius went up to the entrance of the old house, lifted and struck a bright brass knocker; a moment later a negro maid opened the ancient black door. He entered a handsome old hallway whose most striking decoration was a complete suit of plate armor, assembled and standing with a spear at guard. The maid ushered Caridius into a large clubby-looking room with an open fire in a baronial fireplace.

A short, fatherly old man arose stiffly from one of the easy chairs and held out his hand.

"Mr. Caridius, I am Heinrich Krauseman," began the Big Stick with a trace of German thickness in his pronunciation. "It is good of you to come to see me. Sit down, sit down. Callie, bring Mr. Caridius some cigars . . . and what do you drink?"

"Rye," selected Caridius.

"My maid's name is California," said the old man, his red face molded into a blurred smile. "The negroes give their children queer names." He rubbed his hands together. "Well, the sound wagon, it did you some good, eh?"

"We thought it did," agreed Caridius, wondering whither this would lead.

"Oh, it did . . . it would," nodded the old man. "People follow a noise. That is the first thing a politician and a

circus man must learn. And how do you think you are coming out in the election?"

"That I don't know."

"Your watchers don't report to you?"

"Why no, they don't," admitted Caridius.

"Well, they should," nodded the boss seriously, "so you will know how many votes you need in each precinct and where to throw your forces. . . . I can tell you . . ." The old man motioned California to hand him a paper on his table. "Now, you, Mr. Caridius, up till one o'clock, were doing very well. You polled nearly a thousand votes . . ." he glanced at his paper . . . "nine hundred and eighty-six. The socialist candidate got . . ." he glanced again . . . "twenty-eight hundred and thirty-two . . ."

Caridius was taken aback.

"That's almost three times as much as I received."

The old man nodded consolingly.

"But you must remember, Mr. Caridius, a number of people had a reason for voting for the socialist candidate."

Caridius glanced at his companion.

"Do you mean that . . . that they had no reason for——"

Mr. Krauseman held up a hand.

"No, no, not at all. I say Cheverierre, the socialist candidate, did nothing to get his votes except put forth his principles. He didn't work for them, they came to him ready made. Once in a while a man is elected like that; everybody rushes and votes for him because they like his principles, but that isn't politics, that's good luck in picking out principles the people will fall for. It doesn't happen often. And really that is a very good thing, too, Mr. Caridius. If the people should habitually vote for principles, things would get out of hand. Nobody could guarantee anything. If men like Merritt Littenham, say, did not have guarantees that the people would not come out and vote more than about once every ten or twelve years, he would not be able to stay in business. He would have to withdraw his capital and retire."

"Why so?" inquired Caridius curiously.

"To protect his fortune," replied the boss. "If the voters got out of hand and voted, they might easily tax the enormous Littenham fortune out of existence. Of course, all other great fortunes would go at the same time, and it would change the very structure of American life; we would cease to be a plutocracy."

"Would that be a good or a bad thing?" inquired Caridius, who was beginning to lose sight of the riddle of his invitation to this home.

"What do you think about it?" inquired Krauseman.

"Why, the money might be more equally distributed," suggested Caridius.

"More equally distributed," satirized the old man. "If money could not be accumulated the whole color of our civilization would change. Men would then focus their ambition on direct power, unmitigated by the convention of money. No, the real object of money has never been its trade value, as most people think it is; its real object has always been in the nature of a ransom; a tax which the people of a country pay to its strong men in exchange for their personal freedom. That is why the people can't use their votes to take the money back again. The whole arrangement would be canceled and the people would fall into direct slavery again, just as Germany and Italy and Russia have done."

The old man's notion was novel to Caridius, notwithstanding that a number of details of American life suggested such a theory. The fact that wealthy men, no matter how rich they become, never cease fighting one another for more wealth gave point to the idea.

"It is odd we drifted into talking about such an abstract subject," commented Caridius.

"Not at all," assured Krauseman. "I wanted to see whether you followed the idea or not. I take it you are really a patriotic man, one who loves his country and is

concerned for the people . . . the nature of your organization suggested it to me."

"Why . . . yes . . . yes," agreed Caridius, "certainly that's the sort of a man I am ambitious to become."

"Then to follow that idea, I wonder if you feel as I do, that when you protect and advance the oligarchy of wealth in America, you are, at the same moment, protecting the foundation stone of American liberty and independence. It really is a magnificent conception. It is a lighthouse, Mr. Caridius, over the dark sea of politics."

"I would have to think your theory out in detail, Mr. Krauseman."

"Certainly, certainly, of course."

"And . . . er . . . and it isn't a theory one could expound to the people as a concrete doctrine . . . a politician could hardly do that."

The old boss made a gesture.

"My dear Mr. Caridius, if a man is able to understand these great obligatory social dogmas, he becomes automatically too wise to mention them to the people. He performs his ministry in silence. To the people you rationalize these fundamental ideas with such phrases as 'the sanctity of contracts,' 'inalienable property rights,' 'the sacred right of sons to inherit the goods of their fathers and their grandfathers, their uncles, aunts and cousins, down as far as the family line can be traced,' but the people who produced this wealth never inherit anything. No, all these phrases and axioms are diplomatic ways of expressing the fact that the people still prefer to pay their ransoms in money rather than be seized bodily and regimented under some sort of dictatorship."

"The more one thinks that over the clearer it becomes," admitted Caridius.

"Certainly. . . ." The old man consulted his paper again, "Now, as I say, you have polled nine hundred and eighty-six votes up till one o'clock. That's quite a good race, Mr. Caridius, considering that you didn't pay the voters any-

thing or didn't promise them anything. Just worked like a man and pulled them in."

"Well, I did promise them something," corrected Caridius, "I told them I would fight graft and corruption."

"Certainly, when you get up to make a political speech, you have to say something, you can't just stand there in silence and say nothing. Of course that is subversive of the great implicit American doctrine of ransom from personal captivity, but then nobody takes it very seriously."

"Well, just how does that appertain to me here and now?" inquired Caridius.

The old boss brightened.

"Ah, that's what I was listening for, there spoke a politician."

"All right, go ahead."

"Well, the figures are like this . . ." He looked at his paper again. "The Honorable Andrew Blanke has polled fifty-two thousand seven hundred and sixty-five, and the socialist candidate, as I say, has a few."

Caridius nodded, puzzled, not seeing whither this led.

"You are . . ." he calculated with his pencil . . . "fifty-one thousand seven hundred and seventy-nine votes behind."

"Yes, I see I am," agreed the amateur politician without enthusiasm.

"Now it just happens that Blanke has polled about one fourth the voting strength of this congressional district. That shows the beauty of a very light vote in a democracy: it gives a man a very comfortable margin to play on."

"What do you mean?" asked Caridius, growing nervous.

"I mean that the election could easily be swung for you, you know, by having the men who have already voted for Andrew Blanke to repeat and vote for you; the total would be perfectly legal, I mean it would lie within the limits of the registration. Nobody could say that any unregistered voters had voted."

"Vote again for me!" ejaculated Caridius astounded.

"Yes, you."

"Why . . . why I couldn't allow you to do such a thing!"

"Well, if you could . . . and did," bargained the old man, "I would have to ask you to keep the election promises I have made to the various men who have financed my campaign."

"Has Congressman Blanke refused to keep such——"

Mr. Krauseman held up a hand.

"No, no, no, don't breathe a word against Andrew Blanke, we started out together, young men, in politics, he went ahead and appeared before the people, and I stayed behind, that was the way our talents ran. We have been brothers, always, Mr. Caridius . . ."

"Then why do you now propose to elect me——"

"Why . . . as a matter of economy . . . to save the tax money of the people. A half hour ago I received a message from Washington telling me that the Honorable Andrew Blanke died in a hospital under an operation." The old German got up slowly and stood looking into the fireplace, moving his heavy eyebrows up and down. "It—it seems . . . unbelievable, Mr. Caridius, that Andy Blanke . . . my old friend Andy Blanke . . . gone."

Caridius stared in amazement.

"Dead? Do you mean my opponent is dead?"

"I mean the man who represented you and me so ably and honorably in the Congress of the United States for so many years has passed away."

8

THE RADIO ANNOUNCER of WJBZ with his flair for topics of public interest used fifteen seconds of his introduction of Gaddo and Squix, popular American comedians, to state swiftly that the Honorable Andrew Blanke, member of Congress, had died in Washington and the Honorable Henry L. Caridius had been elected in his place. The comedians then went on with their thirty-minute program.

While the announcer had gauged correctly the importance of this bit of news, still a few individuals here and there listened to it with unusual interest.

Miss Rose Saylor just happened to tune in on the program while her companion, Jim Essary, was assembling a sheaf of blueprints on a long table in his laboratory.

"Jim, did you hear that?" she ejaculated. "Mr. Caridius has been elected to Congress!"

Essary was amazed.

"Why, I thought he was trying to do some sort of meritorious thing . . . get together a body of middle-class opinion."

"Apparently the other congressman died, and I suppose the news came in time for the majority of the voters to swing to Mr. Caridius."

"Imagine such a thing . . . what unbelievable luck!"

"Yes . . . if there is such a thing as luck."

The man smiled at his helper out of affection and pleasure.

"I forgot you didn't believe in luck."

"I believe in destiny."

Essary shook his head.

"That's religion's last stronghold in an educated woman . . . destiny . . . a woman is so intimate with life that she simply can't believe it is all fortuity."

"I believe in destiny for you, Jim."

The man walked across the floor and put his arms around her.

"It's nice to have a woman in the laboratory believing something."

The girl pressed his arm more closely around her.

"Faith is more necessary than logic in people's lives . . . if they mean to keep on living."

"Well, yes . . . that's true . . . at least, it is pragmatically true."

The girl turned her head and looked up at her companion.

"Jim, if your friend is elected you'll have a friend in court, won't you?"

"A friend in court? . . . How . . . where?"

"Well, if you decide to patent that powder for yourself and try to sell it to the War Department . . . Mr. Caridius would be there in Washington, wouldn't he?"

"Why ye-es . . . ye-es. . . If we should decide to do that, I wonder what would be the best way to manage it?"

"That, of course, I don't know."

"I could make a try at taking out the patent under a manufactured name . . . for example, Saylor and Rose Chemical Company."

"Oh, the idea of me getting all the honor!"

"Well, it may not turn out to be entirely honor . . . if we try it."

While these listeners greeted the announcement with this reaction, still another effect was produced in the night club, Cairo, in the heart of the city.

In this plangent and rattling establishment, at a corner

table where the diners faced the door and could easily see who went in and out, Mr. Joe Canarelli dined with three guests, a man and two women. He was talking above the noise of a jazz orchestra:

"And do you know, after I give the damned old skirt time on her dues, I'll be damned if she didn't walk straight out and squeal to a cop."

One of the diners, a man with flaxen, almost white hair, stared at his host.

"Nix, Joe . . . she couldn't . . . not after you favored her like that."

"Couldn't hell. . . . Why, she spilled how much she had paid me down to a dollar, and the cop come charging down on me with the info . . . I had to split with him on all I had collected from her." Mr. Canarelli felt vilely treated. "So I steps back to her place and smashed ever'thing in sight. See?"

"It's a wonder Joe didn't rub out the old girl herself, ain't it, Whitey?" observed a girl called Ella to the white-haired youth.

"It is a wonder," nodded the small man, looking at Ella, Whitey Lang's girl, and comparing her with Sibyl, his own attendant. Of the two Ella seemed faintly preferable to Mr. Canarelli because she was Whitey Lang's girl. Then there floated across his mind the Estovia girl, standing in the shop looking at him and her mother.

At this point a uniformed man entered the door of the Cairo. Mr. Canarelli's face remained the same, but he laid down a napkin and picked up a fork.

"I be damned," he said in a conversational undertone. "There's O'Sheen now, the cop that shook me down."

"Well . . . he's paid off," said Whitey Lang.

"He's looking for somebody," put in Sibyl uneasily.

"What the hell," snapped Ella, "he's been paid off. It's a wonder Joe lets him walk around alive. . . ."

"Got to soft pedal with the force," explained Canarelli, "we got to have police protection same as anybody else."

The officer was moving with a fair imitation of aimlessness among the tables. As he passed by the racketeers he asked in an undertone without stopping or looking at the group:

"Busy, Joe?"

"Never am busy, cop."

"Men's lounge . . . in a few minutes."

"Sure."

O'Sheen moved on to the opposite side of the club and sat down at an empty table.

Whitey Lang looked at Joe and the two women.

"Now, what the hell?"

"I can't guess," frowned Canarelli, smoothing his sleek marcelled black hair and looking at the door again.

"He's not making a grab again?" hazarded Whitey.

Canarelli lifted a hand, a shoulder and an eyebrow.

"Can't tell, there's no system about the police—it's why they don't take over all the rackets themselves."

"I wonder you let him get home tonight," said Whitey's girl, Ella.

Ella was gradually becoming more enticing than Sibyl.

"Come on, let's trot across the floor," said Canarelli, "I drop you at the door of the lounge."

The girl laid her purse on the table, picked up her handkerchief and got up. Mr. Canarelli took her in his arms. She was as tall as he and was smiling a discreet smile in his eyes. They placed their cheeks together and went dipping and gliding over the waxed surface, lifting their heels rhythmically at right angles on the turns.

"You sure do the turns smooth," said Ella. "Whitey can't do that."

"I wonder sometimes you don't get a better dancing partner," murmured Mr. Canarelli impassively.

Ella moved her face to look at him.

"Why, Joe!"

Mr. Canarelli lifted a shoulder, smiled, ended the brief

dance near another table, spoke to the occupants, attached Ella momentarily to this new group and left her.

In the men's lounge Mr. Canarelli took a seat where he could see the door and also look at his own reflection in a mirror. Presently O'Sheen came in and passed on through into the men's toilet. Mr. Canarelli arose and followed him into the white-tiled empty space. The officer's blue bulk loomed above the suave little man in evening clothes.

"Did ye know there was a complaint filed against me and you?" inquired the policeman.

"Hell no! . . . Who squawked this time . . . not that damned old skirt?"

"No, it was the outside dame from the Big Stick's office. She signed the complaint as Mrs. Estovia's best friend."

"*She* did . . . the outside dame?"

"Yis, she's the one."

A glimmer of comprehension went through Canarelli's head.

"Then she's the one who tipped. . . ." He pointed a finger up at the officer. Then the realization came to him that he had been wrong in breaking up the old woman's pots and spilling her syrup. "Well I be damned," he said unhappily. "A man ought to wise himself up before he starts. . . . Who did this outside skirt complain before?"

"Pfeifferman."

"Well, Pfeifferman's fixed."

"But ye don't understand," nodded the officer uneasily. "This outside girl plays around with this new man, Caridius, who the Big Stick lent the sound truck to."

"Well, if that's all . . . just lent the sound truck . . ."

"Hell fire, he's in Congress . . . landed there with a majority of about two thousand votes!"

The small man forgot his personal appearance in the mirrors of the toilet and stared up at the officer in shocked attention.

"I thought the mob voted for Blanke?"

"It did, then we got tipped off to vote again, for this man Caridius."

"A split?"

"No, it turned out Blanke was dead."

"Who is this Caridius, how come him . . ."

"That I don't know . . . it looks like it might be the start of a clean-up."

"And me going to have to buy a new set of cops, police judges, ever'thing, all around?"

"Well, it's this damned highbrow mob, Independent Voters' Alliance thing. I imagine things got to smelling so, the Big Stick thought he'd better let in a little air . . . give the newspapers a reform run . . . and they're starting in on me and you."

"You oughtn't to have butted in on me today," grumbled Canarelli with a worried air. "You were paid off already, what did you come horning in on me for?"

"Hell, don't talk about that now . . . ye don't want your money back?"

"No-o . . . no, I won't take it back. I don't pay off and take it back."

"I didn't think ye did. Say, listen, I don't see why ye couldn't drop out of town for a few days?"

Canarelli looked up at his companion.

"Want me to drop out of town . . . to save your skin?"

"Well, I'm already one of the system: you'd have to break in a new man. No telling what sort of a fellow he would be."

"Do you know what it would cost me . . . leave my rackets and drop out of town for a few days?"

"Oh . . . plinty . . . plinty, I guess." O'Sheen blew out a breath. "I wish I hadn't mixed in right then . . . but you boys are so easy," he added in vague self-justification.

"There's coming a time," snapped the racketeer, "when we won't be so easy . . ." he caught himself up, "I think we better find out exactly what we're up against before we do anything. I just went wrong on that Estovia thing because I wasn't wise."

"What ye going to do?"

"See the Big Stick. It may be we are going to have to pick out some man to let down so you damned cops will have something to show the people."

"My God, I hope it won't come to that . . . but you can't see the Big Stick, can ye?"

"Well no, but I'll call up my front, and he'll see him."

"Yis, you do that . . . and let me know what Myerberg says."

"Well, look here," pointed out the small man, "I can't send my lawyer to see the Big Stick unless he's weighted down."

"Well . . . weight him down."

"But this is mainly for you I'm sending him."

The officer eyed the small man.

"Look here, do ye or don't ye want your damned eleven dollars back?"

"Why, hell, this has nothing to do with that. Your part in this ought to be at least fifty. . . . Of course, if you don't want to go through with it I can drop the whole thing."

O'Sheen stared, then began with lurid eloquence:

"God damn the racketeers that'll pay ye off one minute and hold ye up the next. . . ." He ran his hands into his pockets, one at a time.

A sudden stroke of genius flashed over Canarelli. He thought, "Why not organize a Metropolitan Police Protective Association, and have the police paying dues instead of whittling. . . ." The idea filled Canarelli's brain with a kind of ironic Latin mirth. He reëntered the lounge and called up COurthouse 1300.

9

THE TELEPHONE in the Caridius apartment drew Ellora Caridius to it. She listened for a moment or two, then placed her hand over the transmitter and said in a reproachful undertone:

"A woman wants you."

Mr. Henry Caridius acted instinctively to place his perpetually jealous wife au courant with the situation and so save himself one of her unimportant but annoying outbreaks:

"Find out what she wants, darling."

"Why no, I won't meddle in your affairs. If you want to keep them from me, you may. From now on——"

The man made a gesture toward the telephone, and the wife asked over it what the person wanted.

"She wants to know if you'll have time to give her an interview."

"An interview . . . about what?" He suddenly held out a hand toward his wife, "Oh no, my Lord, don't ask her that, she's a newspaper woman. Wait, I'll answer her. No, you go ahead and talk for me. It will seem more businesslike to have somebody like a wife or secretary make your appointments. Ask her when she wants the interview?"

"She says right away, she wants to get it into the afternoon paper."

"Tell her I start to my office from the Albemarle Apart-

ments in twenty minutes: if she will be here by that time she can ride down with me."

"What are you going to your office for? I thought you were through with that."

"Well, I've got to clean it out and cancel my lease. If I can't do that I'll try to sublet it. But it is a very good idea to sound in a hurry to the reporter." Caridius had a picture of how his interview would look in the paper, "The reporter caught a flying glimpse of our new Congressman in the midst of his multifarious activities . . ." something of the sort. It helped to give the public the impression of an intensely active man of affairs.

"I imagine your uncle will be glad you are giving up your office," observed Ellora.

"Well . . . I don't know," said Caridius who did not like to recall that his uncle still had to help him pay his office rent. "Uncle George realizes it is a long pull to establish a law practice in a big city, but when you've once got it, you've got something."

"But you are giving it up."

Caridius looked at his wife, annoyed.

"Ellora, I know I'm giving it up, I was telling you what Uncle George realized."

Ellora fell silent for a few moments, then said:

"I wonder how old she is?"

"Who?"

"Why, that woman reporter who is coming to see you."

"Oh, I suppose that is as much of a mystery as any other woman's age."

Here a motor chortled up to the entrance of the Albe-marle.

"There she is now," said Ellora in an uneasy voice.

Caridius took his hat and coat, then, as an afterthought, went to the closet and brought out a cane which he almost never carried. When he attempted to kiss his wife good-bye she turned her lips away as a reproof of his dalliance with an unknown woman but submitted her cheek. Her reserva-

tion did not catch the new Congressman's attention in his stir over being interviewed for a newspaper. He walked with his cane out of the Albemarle, trying to think up some opinions on the questions of the day.

Approaching the apartment entrance came a girl much younger than Miss Stott, leading a dog on a leash. It was a harlequin great Dane and was remarkable because it was so large and lithe that it looked more like a black-and-white tiger than it did a dog.

The girl herself was large, and she held up a hand at Caridius as he came out of the Albemarle.

"Excuse me," she apologized, "but I must ask if you are Mr. Henry Lee Caridius?"

"Yes, I am, and you are the girl who has come . . ."

"To interview you for the *Tribune*. I am Miss Littenham. Have you a cab?"

"No, I'll pick one up."

"You can use mine. I was so afraid I'd miss you. . . . Have you held any other offices before?"

"No, I haven't."

"That's remarkable, starting your political career right in Congress." She pulled on her leash. "Here, Rajah, get back in the cab . . . get back . . . don't get on the seat . . . lie down there on the floor . . . double up your legs. . . . Now, Mr. Caridius, you can get in." At the new Congressman's hesitancy, the girl reassured, "He won't bite you. He won't pay any attention to you. He has won four blue ribbons at dog shows and since then he's quit paying any attention to anybody. You are a lawyer, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"Now, step over him . . . there you are. You sit at his tail and I'll sit up at his head. It looks dangerous but it isn't. . . . You have had political aspirations ever since you were a boy, I suppose?"

"No, I started about six months ago."

"Well, really you don't run according to form at all. . . .

Surely you have practiced public speaking by the seashore with pebbles in your mouth?"

"I went down to do that one day, but it was a sandy beach, there were no pebbles, so I gave it up and came back."

Miss Littenham drew out her pencil and pad.

"I'm putting down you have a keen American sense of humor. . . . How came you to run for office at all?"

"Shall I answer seriously?"

Miss Littenham considered.

"Well, not too seriously. This is going to be for the women's page in the Sunday edition of the *Tribune*. If you somehow could make your answers of interest to women, it would help me out."

"I wonder if it would interest them to know that I started out to try to form a group to express the middle-class attitude in America?"

"What is the middle-class attitude?"

"Well . . . it's rather hard to express," evaded Caridius.

"I know the attitude of the wealthy," stated Miss Littenham: "they want the people to have plenty of money to spend and revive business; but they don't want any of their own money commandeered in the process, and they don't want the government to issue any new money for fear that it will cheapen what they have. The poor people take the opposite inconsistency. They want the government to issue them enough money to bring on better times, but they want some arrangement made whereby it won't collect once more in the hands of the wealthy and clog up business again."

Caridius began to laugh at the girl's explanations.

"Now, the middle-class straddle the issue and repeat the inconsistencies of both the rich and the poor. They want two double negatives instead of one. That's why they have nobody in Congress to represent them; it can't be done."

Caridius stopped his laughing to ejaculate:

"Here, taxi, that's my office, right there . . . the Lecksher Building."

The driver held out his hand and swung in to the curb. The girl began preparations for closing the interview:

"Shall I quote you as saying that?"

"Saying what?"

"What we have just been talking about."

"Well now, those were your ideas," pointed out Caridius.

Miss Littenham gave a brief half-apologetic smile.

"Well, as a rule, when a reporter interviews a prominent politician he has to . . . er . . . suggest a topic, but you were different. I really think your idea about the great American middle class having no representative in Congress is very interesting."

"I wouldn't put that in because the other congressmen might take it as a precriticism of them before I ever laid eyes on them."

The girl was evidently disappointed.

"Well . . . all right." Then she began talking, rapidly intent on getting something of interest to women: "When will you go to Washington?"

"Right away, I suppose."

"Move your family there? . . . You are married, aren't you?"

"Yes to both questions."

"Good, now that is interesting to women. . . . Will you occupy the same offices that Congressman Blanke occupied?"

"I imagine so."

"Well, I imagine you won't."

"Why?" inquired the new member, a little surprised.

"Because suites in the Office Building go by priority."

"I didn't know that."

"Yes, they do. . . . Shall I say that you will very probably have to break up housekeeping in your Washington office and find new quarters? . . . That is the sort of thing that will catch feminine interest."

"All right, say that."

"And let me see. . . . Oh, yes, my readers would like to know if you have decided on your office force yet."

"No, I haven't."

"Don't you even know who your private secretary will be?"

"No, I don't."

"Isn't it even promised?"

Caridius thought of Miss Stott, but he did not want her name to appear in the interview for fear that his wife would see it.

"No, I haven't promised anything to anyone. That is one of the principles of the Independent Voters' Alliance. As their representative I have kept quite free to . . ."

Miss Littenham was nodding absently and evidently not hearing this one thing which Caridius was particularly anxious for her to hear and record.

"Certainly, certainly," she murmured, feeling the handsome ear of her dog for inspiration. Then she asked curiously:

"I wonder if a secretaryship in Washington would be interesting?"

"Are you going to write about that?"

"No, no . . . I was just wondering if it would be interesting, that's all."

"I imagine it would depend on the person. . . . Now a girl like you . . ."

Miss Littenham frowned a trifle.

"There would undoubtedly be a norm of interest in any position without regard to the person occupying it."

"Why . . . ye-es . . ." agreed Caridius somewhat disconcerted by this.

"Interest in a position would depend upon its possibilities for human contacts and insights and knowledges."

"You are just out of college, aren't you?"

Miss Littenham looked at him, surprised and somewhat disconcerted herself.

"Why do you think that?"

"Your using 'knowledges' in the plural. It is never pluralized anywhere except in Eastern colleges where they have so much of it they have to divide it up into small packages like that for convenience of storage."

Miss Littenham colored as if she were personally responsible for the neologism.

"I fell in the habit of using it like that in Chicago University."

"What did you study there?"

"Oh, not any regular course. . . . Let me see, where were we?" She poked her notebook with her mechanical pencil.

"We were talking about the irregular course you studied in Chicago," persisted Caridius, amused at the girl's pointless confusion.

"Why . . . politics," she said antagonistically and flushed again.

"Politics!"

"Yes . . . but it didn't lead to any degree . . . there were no credits attached to it . . . it was something you could take if you wanted to."

A policeman appeared at the cab window.

"You are going to get out here, aren't you?" he suggested politely but pointedly.

"Oh yes, yes," ejaculated Caridius, looking around. He opened the door and hastened to the curb, scrambling over the huge Dane.

"You may quote me," he called back, "as saying the most charming political interviewers have always been specialists."

The girl nodded and smiled.

"That's a very nice compliment. Good-bye. To the Tribune Building, please, taxi."

As the cab moved away the great dog of the four blue ribbons did not deign to turn his spotted head to look at the man who had stumbled over him.

10

As THE Honorable Henry Lee Caridius started for the elevator in the Lecksher Building, Miss Littenham, the reporter for the *Tribune*, persisted in his thoughts. Not only was she pleasant to see, but she possessed traces of that genuine tremulousness of invitation toward all personable males which, a decade or so ago, was so greatly admired and cultivated under the name of modesty. More than that, there was a kind of vague contradiction about the girl which kept the politician thinking about her. He could not quite place his finger on what it was. The shadowy riddle kept him from planning just how he was going to rid himself of his law office, which he had come downtown to do.

As he entered the elevator a short, stout, curly-headed man among the passengers seized Caridius' hand, gripped it, and at the same time stroked the side of his hand with his thumb as a signal of some secret fraternity.

"Congratulations, Caridius . . . how was my hunch, eh?"

"Thanks, thanks, Myerberg. . . . Why, your hunch was the most surprising thing I ever heard of." Caridius lowered his voice in order, morally, to exclude from their conversation the other passengers jammed against them.

The elevator stopped at the fifteenth floor, and the two stepped off together.

"Well, what are your plans?" inquired the lawyer. "And

as a member of your organization, can I assist you in any way?"

"I don't believe so, thank you."

"Oh, by the way, I suppose you are going to the memorial services?"

"What memorial services?"

"Why the memorial services in Congress for Mr. Blanke and all the other congressmen who have died during the year. You know it is an annual thing."

Caridius considered.

"I hadn't thought about going. . . . Mr. Blanke was an opponent of mine. . . ."

"My dear fellow," cried Myerberg, "a politician ought to mourn the passing of a man he can beat: the next man up may beat him."

Caridius paused at the door of his own office and drew the key slowly from his pocket. He did not want to invite Myerberg into his office, which was small and sparsely furnished.

"Well, I may go."

"Yes, do by all means, it will look well."

The politician unlocked his door reluctantly, and as the lawyer did not go on to his own office, Caridius observed lightly that he had been called up for an interview early that morning.

"What paper?"

"The *Tribune*."

"Mm-mm, pretty good paper, conservative paper, beginning move to swing your vote to the stand patters."

"You know the reporter they sent to interview me, there was something odd . . . by George, I know what it was!"

"What?"

"Her dog."

"What was there odd about . . ."

"Well, it wasn't exactly about the dog, it was about her having such a dog . . . a huge creature, must have been

very expensive. Now how do you suppose a girl reporter on the *Tribune* ever came by a dog like that?"

Caridius opened his door and saw a single letter lying on his threshold. Such a meager correspondence was embarrassing.

"You don't know who the girl was?"

"Said her name was Littenham."

The Jewish lawyer took a step back and looked at his companion.

"Littenham, my God, she could have a gold dog if she wanted it!"

"Oh, you don't suppose it was one of *the* Littenhams?" ejaculated Caridius, somewhat excited himself.

"You say she was just a reporter on the *Tribune*?"

"That's right . . . writing for the women's page in the Sunday edition."

"Oh well, no, she couldn't be that, she was undoubtedly some other Littenham."

Caridius stooped and opened his letter in an implied aside while he listened to Myerberg. It was from Essary, a brief note, and Caridius divined its contents.

"Well now, here's some legal business I'm not going to be able to attend to," he observed with an air as if the letter were a small part of a very great deal of business which he would not be able to attend to.

"Why not?" inquired Myerberg with concern.

"I'm going to close up my law office. My work in Congress will keep me continuously in Washington."

"Look here," objected Myerberg, "that was exactly why I walked with you to your office. I had a hunch you might be giving up your business."

Caridius looked at this square-cut man of many hunches.

"Do you want it?" he asked curiously. "Are you in the market for my goodwill?"

"Oh no, no, not that. I wanted to warn you against giving up your practice. You don't know how long you'll keep your seat in Congress. If you drop out of practice here in

town it's hard to pick it up again. If you should lose your seat and then have to start all over again, that would be a long pull."

The politician smiled wryly.

"I see disaster and misery ahead of me, but I don't see how I can be in two places at once."

"That's what I was getting at. Do you remember coming to our firm once with a proposal that was very flattering to us indeed?"

"It's remarkable how you restrained yourself," observed Caridius.

But Myerberg continued effervescent:

"Now, now, don't judge me by that. You had not demonstrated your ability then, Mr. Caridius. Today you are a congressman. When you come out of Congress you will be one of the best advertised lawyers in Megapolis. You will give our firm a standing it has never had before. And in the meantime," he rushed on without a pause, "if you make this connection with us, we will hold up your present practice."

"Yes, but it isn't ethical for a congressman to plead in a court of law."

"No, you can't plead, but you can be a consulting partner. You can give us the benefit of your counsel and your learning."

Caridius had thought over the possibility of entering an established law firm if he should be elected, but he had in mind an old and aristocratic law firm which handled only corporate and banking business. But this firm already had among its partners a senator or two, an ex-secretary of state, and a mere congressman would be of no importance to the house. But on the other hand, with Myerberg, Meltofsky, Koch and Grannan, he would be a ranking member, at least in publicity.

"I don't like the idea of an all-criminal practice, Myerberg," stated the congressman frankly.

"We go into almost every court, on a variety of cases,"

assured the lawyer; "chancery, the Court of Appeals, the Federal courts, the Supreme Court."

"Ever handle any corporation business?"

"Sure we do."

"Draw up corporation charters?"

"Listen, there's not a man in this burg who can draw up a trickier charter than Meltofsky. He's a wizard."

Now in the abstract this was exactly the sort of practice Caridius wanted to avoid, but in the concrete, it was precisely the sort of charter which at that moment he needed. And it occurred to him that there was a moral question involved in the situation. He would not be doing right by Jim Essary if he did not place his old schoolmate's business in hands particularly competent for that sort of work. He handed the letter to Myerberg.

"All right, here is my first assignment to your firm."

"Our firm," corrected Myerberg warmly.

"Mm-mm, all right, our firm. Here is a client of mine who wants to incorporate under the firm name of Saylor and Rose."

Myerberg took the envelope.

"All right, I'll answer this personally and explain to your client that you are now a member of our firm and this business will be handled through us. Come on back to my suite, let me induct you into office."

Myerberg's suite occupied a whole wing of the Lecksher Building on the same floor with the politician's office. When the two men entered the place they found it filled with activity.

A youth with pale Scandinavian hair, so pale it was almost white, was talking to a thin, angular, yellowish man, who listened with protruding eyes which looked sleepy under half-shut lids.

The white-haired youth was saying:

"The rap's coming through the dame what belongs to the high-hat mob. Joe says it looks like a clean-up, and we're to furnish the dummy."

"If it is we'll see what can be done about it," assured the angular man with the drooping eyes.

Myerberg called across the office in a pleased voice:

"Dave, come meet Mr. Caridius, our new congressman. We were just outlining a plan to take over his practice while he is in Washington. Mr. Caridius, let me present my partner Mr. David Meltofsky."

The inert-looking man got himself out of his chair and came across the office with a smile that merely curled the corners of his red lips but left the rest of his yellow face unmoved.

"It's a pleasure, Mr. Caridius . . . and may I congratulate you on your fortune?" he said in a voice low, discordant and monotonous.

"Mr. Caridius deserved it," put in Myerberg enthusiastically. "If ever a man worked for what he got . . ."

"If you get anything in this town you deserve it," said Meltofsky with his localized smile.

"Now the question of honorarium will naturally arise in our negotiations," began Caridius diplomatically.

"That's the sort of thing that will work itself out," declared Myerberg roundly.

"It's a minor matter. We want you with us, Mr. Caridius," creaked Meltofsky with a lift of his thin shoulder. "Now, if you gentlemen will excuse me . . . I am due at Magistrate Pfeifferman's court in . . ." He looked at a large gold watch which he drew from his vest pocket.

"Wait, I'm going past there," said Caridius. "I'll pick you up that far."

Meltofsky, who always walked, was pleased at the offer. He nodded to the pale-haired youth to follow while he and Caridius walked out of the offices together, went to the elevator and dropped down to the street level.

Here they hailed a taxicab and started for Magistrate Pfeifferman's court. The pale-haired young man called another and followed their lead so that the two cabs arrived at the court at about the same time.

Around the entrance of the court had collected a number of those odd persons who form street crowds and who somehow manage to know what is going on inside a building by simply standing on the outside. Some of these personages now called to each other:

"Yonder comes Caridius!" "Yonder comes the new congressman!" "Tell that woman in there he's here!"

"Then he really is on the trail of the mobsters?" cried an incredulous voice; whereupon one of those sardonic souls which every street crowd contains snapped out:

"If that's Caridius; it's Caridius, ain't it?"

While this colloquy ricocheted off in one section of the crowd, another, more purposive line of communication clattered from man to man into the courthouse itself.

"Tell that girl Mr. Caridius is here!" Then fainter and farther away, "Tell that woman Caridius has come!" "Caridius has come!" "Caridius has come!" And fading out like an echo in the building, "They say outside that Caridius has come!"

The first fruits of this disturbance were two men with cameras who came pushing out of the crowded door toward the taxi.

"Which is Mr. Caridius?" inquired one of them.

Before anyone could reply the second cameraman ejaculated:

"There's Whitey Lang right behind him. Whitey, will you step over there and pose with Mr. Caridius?"

Meltofsky began objecting in his weak discordant voice:

"No, Mr. Caridius is not posing with Whitey Lang . . . he's on his way to the airfield."

As the photographers adjusted their instruments Meltofsky jerked off his derby and held it up in front of Caridius' face and at the same time ordered the chauffeur to drive on.

But the crowd was too dense for the taxi to move quickly and the cameramen shoved their way around to a raking position where they could include Whitey Lang and Caridius

in one plate. Then, as the taxi crawled away, Miss Connie Stott appeared excitedly in the doorway.

"Mr. Caridius," she cried in a high voice, "I've been telephoning everywhere for you!"

"He's on his way to the flying field . . . he's going to Washington. . . ." Meltofsky waved a hand with Jewish excitement.

"Yes, but the Estovias are in here," called Miss Stott desperately, "and Canarelli!"

"Oh, that case has come up!" cried Caridius, getting out of the motor.

"Who is that woman?" inquired Meltofsky uneasily.

"Connie Stott, secretary of the Independent Voters' Alliance."

"You don't want to miss your plane!"

"I can't leave her in the middle of this trial."

"My God, you can't help her . . . you're a member of Congress now!"

As Caridius made his way into the magistrate's court the pale-haired Lang ran across the street through the traffic to a drugstore.

Caridius, Meltofsky and Miss Stott pushed their way back into the courtroom with Meltofsky saying, "He can't take any part in this: he's a congressman," and Miss Stott ejaculating in great relief, "I have phoned for you absolutely everywhere."

A thought of the angry suspicion Ellora must be suffering glimmered through the politician's mind; then the court scene caught his attention. The small dapper figure of Joe Canarelli in the defendant's stand was really the center of the crowd. A number of spectators in the jammed room glanced at Caridius as he entered, but their eyes returned to the notorious racketeer. Every one of them knew that here was a little man who had caused the deaths of scores of men and women and who would snuff out any person in his way as mechanically as he would a candle. Caridius realized in himself perfectly the curiosity, the faintly resentful but in-

tense admiration the crowd felt for the little killer and extortioner.

As Caridius moved to the open space reserved for counsel and witnesses, a few of the maturer voices called to him sotto voce:

"Put a crimp in his artichoke racket!" "Stop his poultry racket!" "Put him out of business! Why should we pay him a cut on everything we eat?"

Nevertheless, they continued their dark admiration for the little man who was able so to blackmail the whole cityful of people.

Men from the outside pushed their way in, and men on the inside worked their way out in a continual exchange. A realization came to Caridius that these were really the people for whose welfare the Independent Voters' Alliance was organized. This changing audience which pushed into the room, looked about curiously for a few moments and then sifted out again to attend to their own private affairs, they were the real American middle class.

Magistrate Pfeifferman looked at the unusual crowd jammed in his courtroom, then at the defendant and the witnesses for the State. He ordered the clerk to call the next case.

"The State versus Joe Canarelli on charge of intimidation, blackmail and sabotage."

"Are you ready for trial?" inquired the court.

As Pfeifferman called the name of Joe Canarelli a renewed buzzing and staring went through the courtroom.

"The defense is not ready, your Honor," said Meltofsky approaching the bench.

"Why not?"

"The defense desires time to summon material witnesses to prove that the Syrup Makers' Protective Association is a reputable organization which the witness Mrs. Antonia Estovia joined of her own free will and volition. We are asking for a continuance of the trial for two weeks."

At this an antagonistic stir broke out among the spectators. Miss Stott arose quickly to her feet.

"The State witnesses are here now," she declared, "and we don't know when we can get them back again. I had to persuade them to come this time. I don't think this case ought to be put off. It is an action brought by an association of citizen voters. It is the first direct act that the ordinary people of this city ever performed. Our congressman, the Honorable Henry Lee Caridius, is here to take part in the prosecution to clean up the city. I don't believe the trial should be delayed for a frivolous reason."

Applause broke out in the courtroom which the presiding officer rapped down.

"But, your honor," pointed out Meltofsky, "Mr. Caridius was not a congressman when he instituted this suit. But since he has become one it is no longer proper for him to appear in the case. The suit should be continued to allow the prosecution to procure proper counsel."

Ironic laughter and hisses greeted this plea.

Magistrate Pfeifferman said in an undertone to Meltofsky, who was standing quite near him:

"I don't believe we can put it off . . . there are some reporters and press photographers here."

"Put it off anyway!"

"Yes, but the next election, all these people . . ." The magistrate shook his big head, then continued hurriedly, "I was tipped off the gang had a man picked out to plead guilty of sabotage."

Meltofsky gave a slight nod.

"I understand they picked Whitey Lang, but if we can get the suit continued . . ."

Judge Pfeifferman shook his head and called aloud:

"Mr. Clerk, is Anson Lang in court?"

The clerk sang out:

"Anson Lang, come into court!"

And just as he made the call Sol Myerberg, closely fol-

lowed by the white-haired Swede, pushed his way through the door.

"I telephoned him," said Lang in an undertone to nobody in particular.

By his simple entrance into the courtroom the short heavy lawyer took moral control of the crowd. Meltofsky began explaining the situation.

"I was asking for a continuance because Mr. Caridius has been elected to Congress."

The crowd laughed again at this statement.

The powerful Myerberg repeated it:

"Your honor, this action was instituted at the instance of the Honorable Henry Caridius acting for the Independent Voters' Alliance. May I say that I myself am a member of that alliance and am as bitter a foe to the rowdiness that disgraces this city as any other member in it."

A sensation at this.

"But I could not complacently see a man whom we had honored by elevating to the Congress of the United States—I could not complacently see such a man stoop to a petty suit in one of the lower city courts. Any legal practice whatever does not befit the dignity of a man who does not construe the law but creates the law." Some of the audience began nodding at this. Myerberg held up a hand. "And, moreover, it just happens that at this very moment our chieftain, the Honorable Henry Lee Caridius, who has led the reform forces of this city to a triumphant victory [applause] is, at this present moment, on his way to Washington to take part in the solemn annual rites for those servants of the people in Congress who have died in line of duty [sensation]. For this court to permit a minor case of rowdiness to interfere with a solemn and patriotic ritual for the dead would be devoid of decency and unthinkable.

"Under the circumstances, I consider that it lies well within the discretion of this court to declare this case continued for a reasonable time to allow both parties to the suit to re-form their lines, and also to permit our distinguished

representative to proceed on his patriotic and spiritual mission."

Prolonged applause greeted this appeal. When it died down, Judge Pfeifferman nodded gravely.

"Under the circumstances, the court will continue this case for two weeks. The clerk will so note it on the calendar. Let the next case be called."

The audience began to pour out of the courtroom talking among themselves. One of the reporters said to another:

"It's going to be the same old stuff."

"A gesture," nodded his colleague. "Now let's see, where's my cameraman? My next assignment was at . . ."

Miss Stott joined Myerberg and Caridius as they left the building together.

"Why isn't it proper for Mr. Caridius to press the prosecution?" she demanded.

"Because he has been elected to Congress," reexplained Myerberg with a faint smile. "It isn't considered the thing for a congressman to——"

"But he was elected on a reform ticket!"

"Well, that's another point," said Myerberg. "When a reform movement elects one of its members to office, that ends it, there is nothing more for it to do . . . the reform has won."

11

WHEN MISS CONNIE STOTT had seen her two coadjutors in reform walk out of the magistrate's court and had absorbed what hope and encouragement she could from their patriotic and spiritual aspirations, she returned to the Estovias.

She felt responsible for the Estovia women because only her urging and enthusiasm had dragged them out of Duggers Alley into Magistrate Pfeifferman's court to appear against Joe Canarelli. She found both of them nervous and indeed terror stricken. The mother and daughter were afraid to venture out into the street and walk home. Miss Stott found them consulting their poor purses to see if they could hire a taxicab for safety.

The enthusiastic secretary of the Independent Voters' Alliance scouted their fears. She pointed out that nothing had happened and assured them that all that was needed to end the dry rot of racketeering in the city was the determined and fearless opposition of the staunch middle class, of whom they were two. She urged them surely to make their reappearance in court two weeks from that day. Miss Stott then made her way across the street to the telephone in the drugstore to arrange a banquet to be given in the Hotel Embassy by the Independent Voters' Alliance in honor of Henry Lee Caridius' victory at the polls.

The Italian mother and daughter moved on under increasing apprehension to their dismantled syrup shop in Duggers Alley. With the hopeful Miss Stott gone, all feeling of personal security had vanished with her. They glanced about in the crowded streets as they pursued their way, half expecting one of the Canarelli gang to be following them or watching them from some basement door or alleyway. The fact that they saw nothing, instead of soothing them, created in their hearts a subtler alarm.

The fear of the two women of an immediate and direct attack by the racketeers and the quarter from which they expected the blow to fall illustrates how very simple and childish the two syrup makers were. As a matter of fact at the very moment they were expecting bugbears to arise out of every basement area and attack them, a large polished racing car, through the accident of traffic lights, passed them twice. The women did not observe this car, nor did the occupants of the car notice the women. But it happened,

however, that each group was thinking and talking intently about the other.

At a few blocks back down the street the motorists had paused to buy a newspaper from a boy. The urchin was yodeling shrilly at the time:

"Joe Canarelli, Alleged Racket King, Haled Before Magistrate Pfeifferman. Denies Blackmailing, Intimidation and Sabotage. Trial Set for Two Weeks."

As the two men glided down the street behind their chauffeur, other cries of the same tenor pursued them block after block.

The small black-haired man opened the several papers he had bought and saw his name in headlines across their front pages. He shook his head, glanced at a mirror set in the panel of his car, then suddenly snapped:

"What Myerberg say about this?"

The white-haired youth gave a little start.

"Publicity."

"Yeh? Clean-up?"

"He said then he didn't think anybody was starting a clean-up."

"Then? What you mean by then?"

"Before the trial . . . before all this." He motioned at the papers.

The small man flapped at the articles with the back of his fingers.

"What's the idyah . . . ever' damned rag in town?"

"Myerberg says it don't mean nothing," hastened the Swede, "dull season . . . out of news . . . got to play up somethin'."

"Hell, this keeps on, they'll put Pfeifferman on the spot . . . he'll have to do something about it."

"At our next appearance?"

"Sure . . . if these witnesses come up again."

"If they come up again?" repeated Whitey with concern.

"Sure . . . if."

"But—but look here," stammered the lieutenant, "if . . .

uh . . . we . . . I mean we rapped on the Estovias the other time when they hadn't squealed . . . hadn't done nothin', except go broke . . . git out of mon——"

The look of the small man stopped the Swede.

"Listen, you play people for what they are now, see, not what they been two weeks ago; two days ago."

As the little man said this he glimpsed himself again in the mirror, then looked out into the street through which they were passing. It gave him a feeling of enlargement. The street was his. Shops paid him certain monthly dues for the privilege of existing. It was because—just as he had said to Whitey—it was because he dealt with men and things as if they had no past; exactly as they were at the moment. He followed the realism of his great countrymen, Napoleon, Pareto, or an Arctic explorer stripping the clothes from his inviolated men at the North Pole to warm himself.

The car conveying the two men sped on to the Imperial Apartments, a tall, vast building which overlay two blocks east and west and three blocks north and south. Here the racketeer and his aide slipped out of their car, dismissed it and entered the Imperial. In this building the five or six thousand tenants lived in complete anonymity one to another. In the vast pile, drunkenness, divorces, burglaries, suicides took place privately, with none of the other inmates the wiser unless they chanced to read of the incident in the morning papers.

The two men walked into a low Gothic entrance, took an elevator to the basement, and wound their way for blocks through underground passages to another elevator which shot them aloft, story after story, to a bright sunlit space of potted plants, gay garden chairs which fronted a penthouse in the style of an Italian villa. For more complete privacy it was surrounded on four sides by a high wall which shut it off completely from a concourse of similar penthouses. The small man produced a key and entered a room that ran the width of the building. A sculptured faun, rugs from Daghes-

tan, a harp, a built-in bookcase full of detective stories set the style of the living room.

Canarelli walked to an antique table and poured wine into two Venetian glasses.

"Listen Whitey," he decided, offering a glass, "the Estovias won't appear as witnesses Thursday week."

The Swede looked intently at his principal.

"You don't mean they are to be . . ." He made an erasing gesture.

"No, that would get more publicity, every damned sheet would say . . ." He threw onto the table the papers he had brought in. "No, something quiet . . . simple . . . natural should happen to the Estovias."

Whitey speculated crudely.

"Something get wrong with their . . . milk?"

The little man flung back his head with a start of silent laughter shaken out of him by this grotesque gaucherie of the North.

"Their milk . . . me tampering with milk when every dairyman in the city pays me to see that their milk is not tampered with. . . . Who owns the house the Estovias run their syrup factory in?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know. . . . Hell, find out!"

"Sure, I'll find out."

The Swede moved gingerly to a telephone on a desk and dialed a number.

"Hello, is this the City Hall . . . the Registrar's office? I want to find out the name of the man or corporation who owns number 21 Duggers Alley?"

There came an interval of silence in which Whitey looked at his superior, then he presently said aloud:

"A Mr. Gaut."

"Ask where he lives."

"Where can we get in touch with him?" After a moment the Swede answered his own question, "Sixteen, Fiftieth Street."

"Fiftieth Street, Fiftieth," pondered the black-haired man. "Now somehow I fancy the Estovias are behind in their rent and that Mr. Gaut is letting them string along . . . which he shouldn't do . . . he oughtn't to do that. It's bad for the other landlords . . . damn it, Whitey, it's very bad for the other landlords . . . you see that?"

"Why no-o . . ."

"What, you don't see that if one landlord lets a tenant lag behind the tenant can run off, beat his rent, take another house, beat that rent, too, and so, just live on free at the expense of the landlords? Don't you know that thousands of people here in Megapolis live like that?"

"Yes, I know that."

"Don't you know it would be a philanthropic thing to organize a Landlords' Protective Association to force the landlords to collect their rents promptly? They could pay a small fee to the association for the superintendence and the office work."

The Swede stared with his face drawn into the sun-grin of amazement.

"Good God, Joe, what do you want to start another racket for?"

"Hell, what do men build bigger ships and skyscrapers and airplanes for? What does any rich man work for?"

A renewed feeling of expansion came to the little man. He glanced at himself in a mirror. A new and amazing vision came to him.

"Mother in heaven!" he ejaculated, "if we could organize all the landlords of this city, that would be the little, the big, the rich, the poor."

"Yeh, the rich," put in Whitey in a monitory tone.

"Sure . . . the rich."

"Well . . . the rich squeeze the poor," warned Whitey.

"Yes, they do, but me . . . Joe Canarelli . . ." He suddenly descended from a pinnacle where he alone, of all earthly men, stood. "Listen, that was just a side idyah. You go to this Mr. Gaut, organize him and have the Estovias

thrown out for back rent, then . . . what could be more natural than they should wander off somewhere?"

Whitey was amazed as the great ellipse of his general's thought finally returned to its point of departure.

"I'll take Lefty Jones. . . . But you know . . . the Estovias didn't really squeal, they just——"

Canarelli made a gesture at his man, ready to break into abuse, when there came a faint sound from an inner room. The small man dropped to attention like a pointer dog. Walked in perfect silence to the door, put his hand on the knob and suddenly flung it open. He stared inside, then suddenly ejaculated:

"Ella, what in the hell are you doing in there?"

The girl Ella came out of the room, rather bewildered.

"I just dropped in here a——"

"How did you get in here . . . how did you get a key?"

"Sybil gave——"

"Sybil?"

"Yes, we were shopping, and I got a headache. She gave me her key, and I come up to lie down."

"Were you asleep?"

"No, I wasn't asleep."

"Did you hear what we said?"

"Yes, I heard what you said."

Whitey Lang looked at his girl Ella with a worried frown.

"She's all right, Ella is . . . she's a straight shooter."

"You go on to number 16, Fiftieth Street . . . get Lefty and go."

The white-haired youth glanced back at Ella and moved to the door, deeply disturbed.

When Whitey was gone the small man's attitude changed. He reached out his hand.

"That won't work but once. I guess you better give me back my key . . . and listen, Ella, I have an idea, you heard what we were talking about . . . there's something I want you to do. . . ." He began explaining with his arm

around Whitey's girl, and as he explained his idea blossomed and colored and expanded as all his ideas were wont to do.

12

MR. A. M. GAUT, into whose real-estate holdings Whitey Lang had inquired, lived in an ex-mansion on whose brown-stone façade the original carvings had been almost obliterated by the wind and the rain. Fiftieth Street, in the earlier numbers, was a quiet thoroughfare of rooming houses. People who lived on Fiftieth Street, after years of seeing each other, sometimes nodded, but they did not know each other's names.

Here and there a roomer would come out and sit on his stoop and look at an occasional passing taxi, a white wing pushing his broom, the corner policeman twirling his club, an airplane chanting across his sector of the sky or at some woman, young or old, who came and went, lonely, impersonal, unknown.

One of these taxicabs that passed through Fiftieth Street stopped at number 16 and let out two men, window cleaners, apparently, if judged by the buckets and mops and rubber squeegees which they carried.

The window cleaners were young men; one of them had pale, almost white hair, a thick neck, an athletic carriage, and he looked over the street with speculative, somehow amused yellowish green eyes. The two climbed briskly up the four brownstone steps to the small balustraded stone stoop before the door. They stood more alertly and closer to each other than ordinary window cleaners would have done.

The white-haired youth rang the bell, and as he did so pulled down the corner of his mouth and winked at his partner.

Presently the door opened and a baggy old man with a newspaper in his hand looked out, then, without speaking, started to close the door again. The pale-haired young man thrust his foot in the way.

"This is Mr. Gaut, isn't it?"

"I don't want any cleaning today."

"We represent the Duggers Alley Real Estate Owners' Association . . . you've got a building in Duggers Alley . . ."

The old man heard this extraordinary introduction in surprise.

"What if I have?" he interrupted.

"It's kept in bad shape, ruins the looks of the alley," stated the young man peremptorily. "Besides, your rents are too low and you don't keep 'em collected up."

"What in the devil is that to——"

"Why, hell, you got to keep in line," snapped the youth. "You got to stand with the other landlords in Duggers Alley. Coöperate! Protect yourself and them at the same time!"

The old man looked at his odd and imperative callers. He pushed at his door again, but could not move it.

The two gangsters stepped into the vestibule and confronted the landlord.

"What do you bums want?" he asked with less confidence.

"We want you to put the Estovias out on the street for back rent."

"Why, I'll be damned——" At the white-haired youth's gesture he softened this to, "Why, they'll pay up."

"That's not it. The Duggers Alley Landlords' Protective Association has decided on a pay-in-advance policy . . . no running behind . . . cash. . . ."

"But . . . but the Estovias can't do it."

"Then put 'em out in the street."

"Why, I'll not do that," defied the old man, taking heart again.

"Oh, you won't do it, eh?"

"No, I won't."

A moment's pause, then the pale-haired youth said in a different voice:

"You see your window here?"

"Git out of my house!"

"Ain't it dingy . . . don't it need cleaning?"

"You two git on out."

"James," ordered the white-haired one, "squeegee Mr. Gaut's window."

The helper reached out his squeegee and pushed out two panes of glass in quick succession. The men heard the glass break in the area below.

The baggy old man turned an apoplectic red. He went shaking out on his stoop.

"Police! Police!" he bawled desperately.

The man with the squeegee came out after him.

"Your damn panes were loose already, they fell out when I tried to clean 'em."

"Police!"

"Listen," advised the young man with the white hair nasally, "what do you think is going to happen to your Dug-gers Alley shop if you don't put them Estovias out?"

The old man continued shouting for the police. Idlers airing themselves along the Fiftieth Street stoops now stared at the baggy old landlord and the window cleaners having a squabble. A policeman came hurrying up the street.

"Hey, what's the trouble there?"

"These damn roughs broke out my window."

"Giving him a demonstration cleaning . . . barely touched 'em . . . so loose they fell out."

"I didn't tell him to clean 'em."

The policeman made a gesture.

"You were bargaining for a window clean, wasn't you?"

"No I wasn't . . ."

"Sure he was!"

"I told 'em to beat it!"

The pale-haired youth spread disgusted hands.

"Now he wants you to pick us up because his windows was so shaky the panes fell out when we tried to give a demonstration."

The officer waggled his stick back and forth.

"You'll have to take your complaint before a magistrate, try to get damages."

The old landlord grew purple.

"I pay my taxes! I expect my property to be protected! Let these hijackers come here and break my——"

"File a complaint! Sue for damages! Go to the police station down on Thirty-fifth and ask for Sergeant Mahoney."

Old man Gaut moved shakily down the four stone steps to the street.

"I'll go, and I'll report you."

The white-haired youth followed him with the step of an athlete.

"Listen," he advised in a tense monotone, "put the Estovias out on the street . . . you got to protect the other property holders . . . if you don't, think what's going to happen to your Duggers Alley shop!"

The old man turned to a spectator of the little drama on a neighboring stoop.

"You saw what them scoundrels did?" he cried furiously.

"Sure I saw it," nodded the man.

"What's your name?"

"Why . . . what do you want to know that for?" asked the fellow defensively.

"You saw him deliberately knock out my windowpanes, I want you as a witness."

The prospective witness became dubious.

"No, no, I wouldn't want to get mixed up in nothing like that . . . wasting time running to court. . . ."

"But, damn it, you won't stand by and see a couple of rowdies break up a man's property."

The man on the stoop got up, shaking his head, and began moving inside.

"No, I . . . really I didn't see anything. . . . I wasn't noticing what you fellows were doing."

Old man Gaut started for another onlooker, but before he reached him this second man also went inside.

As his victim tried to gather witnesses for his lawsuit the blond saboteur moved away unperturbed.

"Listen you," he warned with a kind of smile on his face, "if you don't clean the Estovias out of your Duggers Alley dump by day after tomorrow we'll come to see you again. Next time we won't knock at your door, we'll see you on the inside." He gave his pale broad head an upward jerk at his companion, and the two walked on down to the corner of the block where a taxicab was waiting.

Old Mr. Gaut stood in the street red with anger and frustration. He shook his fist at the quiet old brownstone expansions into which his nameless prospective witnesses had vanished.

"Damn such cold-blooded devils! See a man's windows knocked out and won't even go to court to help him! The damned selfish——"

He saw a woman and a man looking at him farther along the street and stopped his futile outcry. It was not good form to raise a disturbance on quiet Fiftieth Street. It was not good form to draw attention to yourself; or to pay too much attention to anyone else; or to speak to anyone you didn't know. So old man Gaut hushed his vituperation and turned back to number 16.

As he did so he observed his newspaper, still clutched in his left hand. He looked at it as if in his insult and wrath he did not know what it was. He shook the paper, saying mentally what good form outwardly had suppressed:

"Damned cowardly cold-blooded lice; not willing to put themselves out for an hour or so . . . for a neighbor." He

felt the strangeness of the word "neighbor" even when thought in Megapolis.

Out of habit his shaking old hands opened his fresh newspaper; it was almost his only contact with life. It was a tabloid. Old man Gaut read the tabloids in order to receive a kind of mental shaking in the torpor of his physical existence. One of its three-decked scareheads announced:

"Racketeers Wipe Out Duggers Alley Syrup Shop! Mrs. Antonia Estovia Defies Canarelli's Gang! Takes Complaint before Magistrate Pfeifferman! Wooed to Rebellion by Pre-election Promises of Candidate, but Caridius with Seat Cinched in Congress Leaves Old Syrup Maker Waiting at the Court. Independent Voters' Reform Over with Before It Starts. . . ."

This paragraph dwindled gradually line by line from very large type to ordinary six point.

As the old man read the paper, a strange, almost an eerie feeling came over him. In the tabloids he had followed the crimes and extortions of the Canarelli racketeers with the simple vicarious pleasure of an uneducated man at a moving picture. The Canarelli gang had become personages to him while the changing victims of the blackmailers were simply names that meant nothing; dummies set up as targets for the skill and courage of the racketeers.

That the skein of those crimes should ever reach out of the paper and wind a filament around him was as likely, in his imagination, as that a shadow should step out of the cinema screen and lay a hand on him in the audience. But this remote, this unimaginable thing had happened. So now he stood on his stoop with his rage suddenly cold in apprehension. He looked down into the area where lay his broken panes. The window above, with maimed eyes, looked down on him.

The old man thought shakily:

"Why, the police . . . the police ought to do something . . ." but he remembered that the police were bought. No wonder the cop on the corner had turned away . . . the

reason why the racketeers wanted old Mrs. Bickford out of Duggers Alley was clear enough to old Mr. Gaut now . . . the continuance of the trial, of course.

The old man moistened his dry lips and thought nervously:

"Well . . . I . . . I can't afford to have my shirt torn to pieces by the Canarelli gang. . . . I . . . think I'd better . . ."

He walked into his rooming house, reading *again*, with nervous care, the whole article from streamer to final period.

13



THAT INTELLECTUAL NEXUS of American life, the newspaper, serves at least to keep all classes of the people thinking about the same thing, even if it spurs those thoughts from the most divergent angles.

For example, the headlines in the tabloid which so frightened old Mr. Gaut on Fiftieth Street presented a moral problem to Miss Connie Stott. That young woman was in the midst of plans for a banquet at the Embassy, celebrating the happy election of the Honorable Henry Lee Caridius to the Congress of the United States, when the account of the Estovia versus Canarelli trial came under her eyes. Then, right in the middle of her plans, there bobbed up the question as to whether or not she would better reserve some or all of the funds in the Alliance's treasury for the exigencies of the prosecution. A number of things might require money: attorneys' expenses, secretarial work, investigations by private detectives. Miss Stott was under the impression that the Canarelli prosecution was still going full tilt.

She called up Myerberg to advise with him about it. The criminal lawyer instantly supported the banquet and then asked curiously why she had consulted him. Miss Stott told him frankly because his last contribution to the Independent Voters' Alliance formed the greater part of the money in the treasury.

"Then I cast my vote for the banquet," decided Myerberg. "I think it would be a very graceful gesture on the part of the Alliance toward its victorious member."

At his end of the wire the lawyer hung up his receiver with the passing thought of the moral value of funds contributed to political parties. Such funds never merge and become lost in the general collection, but they continue to bear a private tag and wield a private influence, no matter how far or how deviously they travel. Really a man of affairs can hardly do a better thing for himself, and, of course, incidentally, for his country at large, than to make liberal contributions to a political fund.

As this telephonic arrangement to make a graceful gesture proceeded across town, a remotely related action took place in Duggers Alley.

In her disarranged syrup shop old Mrs. Antonia Estovia leaned her thick body forward to stare at a deputy sheriff and his two men in blank dismay.

"But, officer, it is some trick . . . Mr. Gaut would not do this to me."

The deputy pointed out a chair and a table to his men. He had learned, through practice, not to allow conversation to interfere with his work. He waved a hand at some onlookers gathering in the doorway.

"Make way there. . . . A trick, ma'am? How a trick . . . Let my men pass out, people, let 'em pass out."

"Somebody . . . you know who . . . is doing this to make trouble for me. . . ." The old woman began to tremble internally as the men actually began to pick up her things and carry them out of the shop.

"Would you know Mr. Gaut's signature if you saw it, ma'am?" inquired the deputy.

"Yes, I have it many times on my receipts. . . . Paula, go get a receipt. . . ."

A dark-eyed girl who stood as stricken as her mother hurried to an old cabinet in the corner as if this would stop the operation of the law. The deputy, for his part, turned through his official papers with that elaborate moistening of his thumb which men of outdoor life seem to find necessary.

"There you are, ma'am."

The old woman stared at it incredulously, then turned mutely to her daughter, who had younger eyes.

"Ye-es," dragged out the girl unhappily, "it's Mr. Gaut's . . . he's turning us out."

"But Mr. Gaut wouldn't put me out like this. It isn't much . . . I've owed him more than this."

The daughter added earnestly:

"Mr. Officer, my mother has always paid."

"Yes . . . well . . . of course I don't know anything about that. . . . Put 'em along the curb on the outside, Frank, so they won't block the sidewalk or the alleyway . . . that pot next and the stove."

"But, listen!" pleaded the old woman, beginning to tremble violently, "he'll tell you it's all right to leave 'em in here. . . . Mr. Officer, listen, I . . . I can't get started no more . . . wait, you, don't move . . ."

"Hey! Hey! Hey there, ma'am, don't lay a hand on the men. We can't stop, ma'am . . . none of us can. An officer like me, ma'am, is a machine. . . . I often say to myself a officer like me is a machine. It don't know where it's going or what it's going to do . . . it clubs you . . . or it picks you up . . . it carries you to jail . . . or to the hospital . . . it's all the same to the machine, ma'am. . . . All right, Frank . . . upstairs. . . ."

Quite a crowd had gathered around the entrance of the shop, denizens of the alley and passers-by. Their eyes mag-

nified the disgrace of the eviction. The girl watched the two men start upstairs.

"You are not going to take out our beds and furniture?" she asked in a low tone, trying not to be heard by the onlookers.

"We're going to empty the house, miss."

"Then . . . what are we going to do?" pleaded the girl in a breathy undertone.

The deputy had detailed suggestions.

"Why, miss, there's several things they do . . . there's the Salvation Army, the employment bureaus, the free lunch stands, but nice-looking people like you and your mother ought to be able to rent more rooms and move in. There you can stay till they put you out again. A lot of very stylish people here in the city live like that the year round. I have reg'lar customers in my business same as anybody else. I know their trunks, their beds, their pianos, their clothes; but, as I say, you have to look good enough so the next man won't insist on his rent in advance . . . or . . . you can hand him one month's rent, if you've got the money. . . ." The deputy talked on, placing his professional knowledge freely at the disposal of his patrons.

When the officers had finished, the girl Paula stood looking at what, up to that moment, had been her home. But now it seemed impossible that this string of miserable furniture exposed to the derisive light of the out of doors, and the gutted shop, now an empty runway for rats, could ever have formed a home. It seemed as if no reassembling, be the law ever so willing, could ever make it a home again.

The onlookers who had remained through the service of the eviction papers now began to drift away. A young woman, somewhat older than Paula, stood across the alley watching the end of the drab drama.

A policeman came up and called out to the old Italian woman that she would have to get that junk off the street. Mrs. Estovia stooped mechanically and began moving a table back into the shop.

"Hey, not in there!" bawled the officer. "Don't you know you've just been kicked out o' there?"

Some of the remaining onlookers laughed at her mistake.

The girl Paula moved closer to the old woman.

"Mamma, I . . . I'm going," she said in an undertone, trying to keep her face straight against the needle of tears that stabbed her throat.

"Where, Paula?"

"I'm going to ask Father Bonazzio what to do."

"Yes, do that, Paula, then come back. . . ." She hesitated.

There was no place, no permanent place where she could arrange a meeting. . . . "I'll be somewhere around here, Paula." She glanced around the mean alley wherein her vanished home still maintained a remembered existence. The old woman turned to the policeman and began:

"Mr. O'Sheen, you taking away the money after I got it paid to Joe . . . you caused this."

"Move this junk! Get it out of the way! Do you want me to call the garbage wagon?"

The girl Paula moved toward the mouth of the alley with the queer realization that the homelessness of the street ahead of her was the same as the alley behind her; that if she turned back or changed her course at any corner, or kept straight ahead, it would all be precisely the same . . . but there was Father Bonazzio. . . .

As Paula neared the street, one of the onlookers, the young woman who had watched the whole proceeding, came after her and fell in step with her.

"You people got a tough break."

Paula nodded, unable to make any reply.

"Do you know what you and your mother's going to do?"

Paula looked around and shook her head.

"Haven't you got no place to go?"

"No, we haven't."

The girl walked up even with Paula.

"I just happened to be coming by here and saw the men putting you out . . . it's a shame."

"We'd paid our dues, but the police butted in," said Paula unsteadily.

"My God, what a break! Are you going to work?"

Paula was very well acquainted with all the types of the streets, and about this woman there was something unprepossessing.

"No."

"Haven't you got any work, dearie?" asked the woman in an oilier tone.

"No."

"Well, a nice-looking girl like you oughtn't to have trouble landing a job. I know they're looking for girls where I work."

Paula glanced around distrustfully.

"What do you do?"

"Me? I'm a hostess in a restaurant."

"A hostess?" repeated Paula, appraising her companion and quickening her steps up the street.

"Yes, a hostess," reiterated the woman with a touch of impatience, "but you couldn't be that right off. But we do need some waitresses, if they're nice looking." Her tone became smooth again. "That's what I thought of when I saw you and your mother standing there like that, with your things put out, dearie. I thought I'd mention it to you."

"What place do you work?" asked Paula defensively.

"A restaurant in the Imperial Apartments. You know the place, a great big apartment house with restaurants and beauty parlors and gymnasiums and swimming pools and flower shops and drugstores: they have everything."

Paula looked intently at her companion.

"I'll take the address," she said, "and come around pretty soon."

"Come around pretty soon," ejaculated the woman, "that's no way to make a business engagement. Say when you'll

come. And if you haven't got nothing to do, why don't you come on with me? I know the personnel woman."

"Personnel woman . . . what's that?"

"Why, she gives you a physical examination before she lets you be a waitress, so as to be sure you haven't got any disease."

For some reason this caused Paula to decide definitely against the woman.

"Well, I'm going somewhere right now. I'll come around tomorrow."

"We need waitresses tonight, dearie, you can go through your examination now and get your uniform."

"I can't buy a uniform."

"The company furnishes one and takes it out of your pay."

"This is where I'm going right now."

"Where . . . that church?"

"Yes."

"I'll wait out here till you come out."

"No, you needn't wait, I'll come on."

"Well, my God, dearie, you certainly don't seem to appreciate——"

Paula turned into the large flat-fronted brick church with a sense of escape from her companion. The interior of the pile reflected the poverty of its surroundings. The stations were small, poorly painted panels reproducing the ancient scenes of the passion of Christ. Here and there in the dark aisles poor people knelt at candled shrines and murmured prayers in foreign languages. They prayed in the main for themselves. In the impersonal land of America there were few persons close enough to the supplicants to persuade a prayer.

As Paula went inside she glanced back through the entrance to see if the woman were still waiting for her. She did not see her among the passers-by.

The Italian girl knelt, crossed herself, then made her way along the candled aisle to a confessional. As she approached

the curtained booth the misfortunes of her family swept over her anew, so that she began to weep silently. She entered the confessional, knelt, and began telling her story, mixed with her sins, through the little opening.

To Father Bonazzio's religion there was a practical as well as a spiritual side, and half an hour later, when Paula came out on the street, she carried a letter in her hands. She started back rapidly and much cheered toward Duggers Alley to reach her mother before chance separated them permanently. As she hurried, she saw, with a touch of dismay, the woman who had followed her, still waiting in front of the church. The woman made a gesture to Paula.

"I thought I would wait, dearie, if you haven't got any place to go."

"I have got a place to go," said the girl defensively.

"Oh, you have . . . whereabouts?"

"It's a home, for me and my mother tonight. Father Bonazzio gave me this."

"But, my God, dearie, a pretty girl like you don't want to go to a home for women. Come on with me to the Imperial."

"But I've got to hurry back and get my mother."

"You . . . can send word to your mother."

"Why no, of course not."

The woman slackened her pace and lifted her hand in some kind of signal. At the moment a big expensive racing car at some distance up the street moved along the smelly pavement to a point a few yards ahead of the Italian girl. As Paula came even with the car, one of the men in it, who seemed not to be even looking at the girl, stepped off the running board, caught her around the waist and legs and lifted her into the back seat. In the midst of Paula's scream, another man clapped a cloth over her mouth. The two pushed her down in between the front and back seats and drew an automobile rug over their catch. The chauffeur then drove the open car through the street of tenement houses at a moderate speed.

14

ORDINARILY the vanishing of Paula Estovia would have caused no comment in Megapolis whatever. Girls disappeared monotonously in that city. But this particular instance gave Mr. Gew Shadway Smith of the Megapolis *Tribune* cause for thought. He went around to Jimmy Denmark, the city editor, with his quandary.

"I think it ought to be played up," said Smith to Jimmy, "because she was to be a witness in the sabotage suit against Canarelli, and besides, she was abducted as she was coming out of a Catholic church."

"Well now, of course, the church end of it, that sort of picks it out of the rut," admitted the city editor.

"And then I could give her history and suggest persons who could be interested in her disappearance," proceeded Gew Shadway Smith, who was born Jim Smith, but because he wrote signed articles in a metropolitan journal, had found it expedient to come out under the more exotic and impressive title, Gew Shadway Smith.

"If you are going to stretch it into a first-page story that would be the thing to do, only I am not so sure we would want to cast any insinuation against the Canarelli gang." Mr. Denmark turned to the telephone on his semi-circular desk.

"Say," interrupted Gew Shadway hopefully, "I had thought of putting that young fellow Caridius on the spot . . . slightly, you know . . . slightly on the spot."

From the telephone Denmark glanced at his subordinate.

"Caridius . . . how are you going to run Caridius in on this?"

"This way: Caridius started this suit before he was elected. It was purely for publicity. But now after he has got into office it is very necessary for him to stand in with the powers that be . . . you see it now, don't you?" abridged Smith hopefully.

"No, I don't," responded Denmark from his wire.

"Why, Caridius spirits away one of his own witnesses so his suit will fizzle out!"

The city editor shook a disgusted hand back and forth.

"Smith, you are fantastic, there is nothing solid——"

"Why, hell, that's a damned original idea."

"Yes, nobody but you would have thought of—— Hello! Hello . . . this the managing editor? . . . Smith here is in with that Paula Estovia story, wants to hook it up with the Canarelli gang trial. . . ."

"No, I don't," whispered Smith loudly, "I want to hook it onto Ca——"

"Shh. . . . Shh. . . . He wants to insinuate the racketeers have spirited her away to keep her out of the witness box. . . ."

"I don't want to do that!"

"Damn it, shut up, that's the only sensible thing you could want to . . . Oh yes, I see. . . . Sure. . . . All right, sir, I'll have Smith soft pedal the whole story: he'll just say she disappeared from her home. . . . All right." The city editor hung up the telephone.

"Why, hell fire!" ejaculated the reporter, badly disappointed, "and her disappearing right in front of a Catholic church too. That's a story in itself . . . right in front of a Catholic church!"

"About two thousand girls disappear in this city every year, and I am satisfied a number of them disappear in front of Catholic churches. . . ."

"Let me leave out Caridius and make a spread of this one

with a gangster background. Our readers like gangster stories."

"To be brief," said the city editor impassively, "it's because the Westover Trust Company has just voted Merritt Littenham a million-dollar bonus above his year's salary."

"The Westover voted him a bonus . . . what's that got to do with Canarelli?"

"Well, you know Littenham is the president of the Westover and he also owns this paper?"

"No, I didn't know it, but suppose he does?"

"It isn't a supposition, he does. And Canarelli deposits a large amount of his cash in the Westover. So the president of a bank who is drawing down a million-dollar bonus wouldn't want to stick pins in his depositors, would he?"

"Mm—mm . . . no . . . no . . . So I am to say, 'Paula Estovia, an Italian girl, disappeared from her home in Little Italy yesterday morning'?"

"You can add 'mysteriously' if you want to . . . 'mysteriously disappeared.'"

In the midst of this rather colorless editorial policy the office door opened and a tall girl appeared in the entrance. She entered, looking backward and making a repelling gesture with her hand.

"Lie down! Stay where you are, Rajah. I'll be out in a moment!"

The two men were embarrassed. The reporter lifted a hand and smiled mechanically.

"Good-afternoon, Miss Littenham."

The girl closed the door on her dog, and the men heard the animal's toes scratching the floor as it turned around twice before lying down. The fact that the girl had banned her dog from the office made the city editor suspect that she had overheard their conversation. It was probably a stop-gap for her own disconcert. Usually she let the animal follow her everywhere in the plant.

"Mr. Denmark," she began in a voice braced with some

inward decision, "when is the deadline on feature stuff for the Sunday edition?"

"Features . . . Thursday at twelve."

"That was yesterday?"

"That's right."

The tall girl pondered a moment, then turned to the door.

"Anything I can do for you, Miss Littenham?"

"No . . . I just wanted to know when the forms closed."

She disappeared outside, and there came a renewed scratching as the dog got to its feet again.

The two men looked blankly at each other.

"You don't suppose she heard . . ." began the reporter.

"Hell, of course she heard . . . what's the deadline to her? . . . just a stall to show us she did hear!"

"I'll be damned!" snapped the reporter. "Have a girl like that right on the staff with the rest of us. Hell, the only consolation about a newspaper job is that we can talk to each other about things we can't print."

"Well, her daddy owns the damned sheet."

"Sure . . . well, I'll quash the Estovia story completely."

"Just say she disappeared. You know there's one good thing about it: as newspaper owners grow crookeder their papers grow more strait-laced. I see an era of lily-white journalism in the near future for America."

"In the meantime, what is to become of us old-time newspapermen?"

"Just be more disappearances of witnesses against the gang."

Smith lifted a hand and went out the door.

As Mr. Gew Shadway Smith passed into the corridor he received a shock by almost stepping into the jowls of a huge spotted leopard of a dog. This shock was greatly reinforced by seeing Miss Mary Littenham standing holding her dog's leash. The girl evidently had been waiting for him, and Mr. Smith now went several colors in succession. In the midst of his disconcert he wondered with what paper he could find another job.

"Jimmy . . . what was it about the disappearance of that girl . . . why can't you write it?"

The reporter speculated swiftly on just how much the girl actually had heard and where it would be safe for him to begin to lie.

"Well . . ." he began tentatively . . . "it was about . . . Caridius . . ."

"Not about Father?"

"Oh no!"

"Then why did you mention Father?"

Jimmy Smith, better known to the world as Gew Shadway Smith, considered swiftly how he could bring in the great Merritt Littenham of the Littenham interests in the least discrediting manner.

"Well, you see your father backed Mr. Caridius' campaign," he invented.

"No, I didn't know that," replied the girl pointedly.

"Why, he had to . . . he backs 'em all."

"Let's go to your desk," suggested the feature writer.

Mr. Smith looked at the girl, at the dog, and thought bitterly:

"This is one hell of an office . . . not wait for a man to write something . . . fire him for what he thinks."

When the two reached the reporter's desk, Smith, at the girl's nod, sat down in the chair while she used the side of the desk in a familiar casual fashion and swung a well-shod foot in the behemoth's face.

"Listen, I'm not angry as you think I am. I really want to know. Instead of offending me, you will be doing me a very great service and a personal favor."

Such a volte face completely washed out Mr. Smith.

He stared at her and asked very honestly:

"Why?"

"Because I've got to spend all my life held up . . ." she made a little circle with her tennis-browned finger . . . "by this work and sweat down below me . . . and I want to know what it really is."

Mr. Smith perused the girl's face, trying to read something other than her words.

"That's very unusual for a rich girl."

"Mm-mm."

"You really won't be offended?"

"Pleased, really."

A pause; then:

"We said this paper which belongs to your father couldn't go after the Canarelli gang because Joe keeps a lot of money in the Westover Trust."

Miss Littenham listened to this calmly.

"Is that all?"

Smith was glad to get off so easily.

"Yes, that's all."

"But the Estovia girl, how did she come in on that?"

"Well, we got to talking about her disappearance and rambled off onto the underworld, and that led to where Canarelli banked his money."

Miss Littenham pondered a moment.

"You think the underworld spirited away the Estovia girl?"

"Somebody did it, and I don't believe it was the directors of the Federated Churches of America."

Miss Littenham perceived that she had driven Mr. Gew Shadway Smith as far as he would go. She shifted her angle.

"I wonder if there wouldn't be some way to handle that story?"

"As things stand now, I'd make it a point not to be able to think of any."

"What about the magazine section?"

"Mm—mm, well anything you put in the magazine section sort of loses its feeling of reality. If you have to put it in, that would be——"

"How about me going down to the Italian quarter and getting an interview from the mother and priest and so forth?"

"That's not a bad idea . . . lot of human interest to that . . . especially the priest."

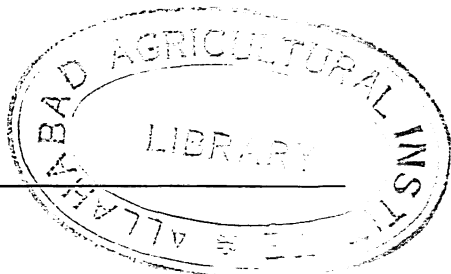
"I'll go now. Would you mind telephoning the doorman to have me a cab by the time I get down?"

"No, no, not at all," assured Jimmy, grabbing the telephone.

The huge spotted Dane got up, a section at a time, and shook himself. The newspaper office was so much dirtier than his kennel that the blue-ribbon winner felt uncomfortable.

When girl and dog had gone out of the door, Mr. Gew Shadway Smith broke into solitary laughter. . . . The idea of a reporter telephoning the doorman to call a taxi when she was going after a story in the Italian quarter. That struck Jimmy as one of the funniest lines he had ever heard pulled in the office.

15



THE APPEARANCE of the svelte Miss Littenham accompanied by her huge harlequin Dane created quite a stir among the fruit and vegetable venders, the cheese merchants and cats and dogs of Little Italy.

When she got out of her taxicab an agreeable policeman held up traffic for her to cross the street and enter the mouth of Duggers Alley. A group of urchins who with toy pistols were mimicking gangsters came dashing toward her and offered for a penny to show her the house the racketeers had torn up.

The girl inquired for Paula Estovia's mother. A chorus

of contradictory evidence broke forth: she had gone to another shop; she had a job as a scrubwoman; she was working at the railroad yard.

In the midst of this a heavy old woman with swollen eyes and gray hair appeared, coming up the alley. The urchins began screaming:

"Mrs. Estovia, she wants to take your picture!"

"Watch out, her dog 'll bite you!"

The great Dane tried to move away from the grimy hands outstretched to touch him.

The girl asked the old woman if she had heard anything from her daughter. The heavy old woman shook her head.

"Nothing at all, miss. . . . I . . . don't think she is alive . . . she wouldn't stay away from her poor old mother like this . . ." and the charwoman began weeping silently.

"Have you another shop, Mrs. Estovia?"

"No . . . and it's a good thing, I think . . . I would just drive away my customers . . . crying all the time."

"What made the racketeers tear up your shop, Mrs. Estovia?"

"You mean . . . from the beginning?"

"Yes."

The old woman pondered tearfully.

"Well . . . you know the politician they called Caridius?"

A little shock went through the reporter as she recalled the conversation she had heard in the *Tribune* office.

"You don't mean he caused this?"

"I think so."

"Caused your daughter to be kidnaped?"

"No, but a girl in his gang complained to the cop after I had already paid Joe Canarelli. The cop shook Joe down for half. That made Joe mad, and he come back and tore up my shop."

It required a moment for the reporter to understand this.

"The girl must have been trying to help you."

"I don't know what she was trying to do."

"When was the last time you saw your daughter?"

"When she started to go to confession. She told me to wait here till she got back. I waited and waited. . . ." The old woman began weeping again. "Finally a boy came and . . . told me what happened to her."

Miss Littenham's heart was filled with pity for the old Italian woman, but in her professional mind she began to think in headlines, "Girl Vanishes from Confessional." She planned to play up the dramatic end of the crime and bring pleasure to thousands of readers, make them pleased in their hearts that the outrage had happened. She would, to the best of her skill, create a demand in the world for a repetition of such crimes.

In pursuance of this object she concluded her conversation with the charwoman and went to interview the priest who had heard Paula Estovia's last confession.

She found her way to the church with half-a-dozen little boys directing her. At the entrance of the edifice she chose a man who seemed clean enough to hold her dog, gave him the leash and a twenty-five-cent piece and went inside.

The church was empty save for an old man kneeling in the aisle mumbling prayers. Miss Littenham stood looking at the poorly painted stations, thinking how the Estovia girl must have moved from painting to painting before she walked out of the cold church into the sunlit street to vanish.

That simple shock was the climax of the story she must write . . . the policy of her father's paper prevented her from pursuing the social connotations of the crime . . . the policy of the paper and the tastes of the readers.

But there were connotations. For example, only poor girls vanished; girls about whom little outcry would be made; girls whose family connections were not sufficiently powerful to protect them from attack . . . and capture . . . the city editor had said two thousand such girls vanished every year.

A sound near the altar caused Miss Littenham to turn. A scrubwoman with mop and bucket worked prosaically on

the floor. Her plashings, which she was at no pains to muffle, somehow managed to take their places among reverent sounds. A priest entered a side door and moved past the altar, crossing himself and kneeling on the mysterious errands of such holy men in a church.

Miss Littenham followed him as silently as she could. When she drew close and spoke he turned with the peculiar air of detachment one finds among priests. Miss Littenham explained her mission and said she understood the Estovia girl was last seen here at confession.

The priest corroborated this.

"She had just been turned out of her home at that time, had she not?" inquired the reporter.

"Yes, she had."

"In her confession, did she seem to be desperate, did she give any hint of violence to herself?"

"I am not at liberty to repeat anything she revealed in the confessional."

"No, no, of course not. . . ." The girl cast about in her thoughts for something to make atmosphere for her projected article.

"Was Miss Estovia a regular communicant in your church, father?"

"She was."

"Was she a—a sincere believer?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because it's dramatic . . . to pray . . . really to pray and have faith, then walk out of the church . . . and vanish."

"Then that is what you feel about all this . . . the drama of it?"

"I came here to write it for the *Tribune*," explained Miss Littenham simply.

The black-robed priest stood looking at her.

"You yourself, daughter, to whom belief seems a matter for drama, do you credit the sacraments of the Church?"

"I'm not a Catholic."

"But some other church, perhaps?"

"Why no-o . . ." hesitated Miss Littenham, half impelled to answer, yes, in order to show a proper deference to the ancient folkways of the people. Then she added a vaguely defensive, "You know, father, not many people do."

"No?"

"That is my impression."

"I wonder why?"

"Why I have that impression?"

"No, why what you say is true?"

"Well . . . I don't know . . . if I may be frank, I suppose it is because people reason more about things and believe less."

The cleric shook his head.

"No, reason in people is nothing but dissected faith, my daughter. It is faith attached to the different parts of a syllogism and not merely to the conclusion. But when it is all done it is still nothing but faith in some authority."

There was a certain symbolic truth in the priest's involutions that reminded Miss Littenham somehow of the symbolism in a rosary.

"I suppose you must mean that today we believe in our skepticism?"

"Oh yes, that is true."

"Then wouldn't you say the truth lay in skepticism?"

"No, I think the world is skeptical because there are too many people in it to believe, daughter."

"Too many . . ." She looked at him curiously.

"You are a writer," pointed out the cleric, "but if you write stories you must have a plot."

"Yes, that's true."

"If there were so many characters in your stories that no two persons ever met again; if your characters were so multitudinous and confused that all feeling of plot vanished; then you would produce nothing but an impression of chance; anarchy; chaos."

"Well . . . ye-es . . . I see that."

"But a human being's profoundest reaction toward life as he lives it is what he feels toward God. If a population is sparse, if a man or a woman meets the same persons over and over, then what he does today will affect his tomorrow. And when a human being really learns that, he has learned morality. In a sparse population life will have design. Man will perceive God directing it. All his reason will perceive it, and nothing can convince him otherwise."

"And where populations are dense?" proceeded Miss Littenham with the idea.

"When it is so dense and so mobile that punishment cannot find its mark; when reproaches are unheard in a wilderness of people; when the civilizee loses all sense of Fate or Destiny or God and the profoundest reaches of his reason perceive only the casual connection of logic between act and act, then a people becomes skeptical."

The girl nodded slowly.

"Yes . . . I see that."

"Of course the more thoughtful perceive design not between individuals but between peoples and nations and maintain their faith, but the commonplace man with his narrow proscenium sees only confusion and stands watching it, skeptical and disturbed."

Miss Littenham talked on a while longer and finally came out of the church thinking of what the priest had said. His epithet, "skeptical and disturbed," not only fitted the times, but it somehow pitied the times. It created an atmosphere, there in the church in which God existed.

When Miss Littenham finished her interview, she came out on the street, took her dog from the man and moved slowly along, thinking of the story she had come to write and what the priest had said. There was a discordancy that was almost ironic between the simple vulgar story she had meant to write and the fringe of an almost medieval belief which she had received, and for a moment half credited, from the priest.

In this mood she entered a drugstore, went to a telephone

booth and called up Gew Shadway Smith in the *Tribune* office. After the clicking of several connections she heard his voice in the receiver and began:

"That you, Mr. Smith? I'm down here in the Italian quarter. . . . I'm not coming back to the office."

"What's the matter, didn't you get the story?"

"Well . . . no-o . . . I didn't."

"Not even a sob story out of the old woman?"

"No, nothing but a . . . not an argument . . . an impression out of the priest."

The voice at the other end lighted up with a sudden cheap imagining:

"Say, you haven't got a clue that the priest spirited her away? . . . You know I had thought of that myself!"

"No, not that at all."

A pause.

"Well, what sort of an impression? Could you make a story out of——"

"It was an impression that there was a—a God."

"A what?"

"God . . . G—O—D . . . God."

There was a silence, then a bewildered:

"My God, think of that! How in the world came you to——"

"I don't know . . . atmosphere . . . I was after atmosphere."

"Well, that's too baroque an idea for the Sunday readers of American newspapers. You can't make a story out of that."

"Well, listen, what I called you up for was to tell you I wasn't coming back to the office."

"I'll tell the city editor you're off for the day."

"No, not for the day . . . I've quit. . . ."

"You don't mean you're quitting the *Tribune* for keeps?"

"Yes, and I wanted to tell you, you can draw my pay envelope, if you like . . . to pay you for the scare I gave you."

"Oh no, you didn't scare me . . . but what you quitting for?"

"Oh, I don't know, just back there in the church it sort of dawned on me the kind of work I was doing . . . so I decided to quit."

"I swear . . . I'm sorry you're leaving the *Trib* . . . it was a pleasure to work with you."

"So I gathered."

"Really, Miss Littenham, you oughtn't to rag a man for acting funny when a pretty woman overhears his conversation."

"Well, I'm joking. Just tell the city editor what I said."

"Certainly."

"And good-bye and good luck to you."

"Good-bye. . . . Oh say . . . before you ring off . . . if—if you meant that about the envelope . . ."

"Of course I did."

"Would you call up the cashier and tell her to let me have it?"

"You can tell her."

"Why . . . she wouldn't believe me . . . just hold your wire a minute, I'll make connections from this end."

Miss Littenham came out of the drugstore, took her dog from the man and signaled a taxi. She maneuvered the animal into the back seat and then directed the driver to Pine Manor on Fulham Road. The man looked at the harlequin and closed the door obsequiously. It was a very long ride. The fare would run up to three or four dollars.

On her way out of the city, Miss Littenham passed the Tribune Building. She looked at its dark entrance with a feeling of having passed a milestone in her life. She had worked on the paper for only three months and a week, but the tall blackened building and the men and women in it had become something real beneath the smooth and lacquered surface of her days.

The taxicab moved on in waves of traffic past the West-over Trust Company of which her father was president. Of

this tall, sky-piercing shape and the clerks and executives in it she knew almost nothing. She recalled the fragmentary conversation between the city editor and Jimmy Smith, that her father had received a million-dollar bonus from the Westover Company: that was why the *Tribune* could not boldly connect the Estovia girl's disappearance with the Canarelli gangsters.

Miss Littenham made an effort to look at this fact directly and without sentimentality; to recognize it as a condition precedent to her own existence. And before condemning any detail of it to inquire as to the moral validity of the whole. As she rode past the skyscraper, she meant, in time, to understand something of the inner workings of the bank.

On Fulham Road, the indication of Pine Manor is a massive stone entrance in a long brick wall, bearing the monition, "Private Road. Keep Out." Behind the wall, for upward of a mile and a quarter towered the dark green kingdom of the pines.

The girl dismissed her taxi at the gate, released her dog from his cramped space and set off walking through the pinetum. The great Dane felt at home. He dashed in white-and-black spotted loops through a wood as aristocratic as himself. Miss Littenham followed the general course taken by the dog. Her thoughts continued on her father and his papers, and his banks and his munitions plant and railroads; all the financial plexus that focused in this stately balsamic grove, the arm of a golf course which she crossed; more woods again, another open vista set with a small decorative pond reflecting a Greek peristyle of white marble which stood just beyond the water. This magnificence was the visible result of her father's operations. If the tolerance of the *Tribune* had not been a necessary factor in this flowering of wealth, her father never would have ordered or permitted it. He was, within himself, a very honest, kind-hearted man.

And in this complex of the present, pointed up with the direct and naked beauty of the Greeks, modified by her

father's feeling for the fitness of things, the girl sensed her own future, lying pregnant in the womb of Time. What it was; what manner of birth it might be, lay inscrutable in the pines, the pond and the invisible air.

The harlequin lifted its nozzle with a heavy interrogatory bark. The girl also looked about her and called tentatively: "Father! Oh, Father!"

She walked toward the peristyle and presently noticed a cigar stub faintly smoking in the grass. She repeated her call more loudly, reached the peristyle, stepped down a little marble step which exposed a simple marble panel in its base. The girl pulled at this panel, but it remained immovable, a part of the solid masonry. By this sign she became sure that her father was inside, under the peristyle, in a tunnel that led to a vault under the pond.

This detail too fell into place among the intricate parts of her reverie. Her father had never told her so directly, but the daughter knew that he had built the chamber under the pond as a refuge against the day when the people should rise up and lay waste Pine Manor and its owners. She knew that her father did not actually believe he would ever have to use the retreat: it was a provision against a possibility.

With this complicated reverie floating through her head she stood in the sunlight beside her huge dog, tapping occasionally on the marble panel and calling in the persistent voice of a small child:

"Father . . . Father . . . open the panel, Father. . . . Father, open the panel."

16

THE PANEL of marble, which was quite immovable from the outside, slid open of itself, and Mr. Merritt Littenham's alert longish face appeared in the aperture in the base of the peristyle. The financier looked at his daughter a little surprised.

"I thought I heard Rajah. Have you been here long?"

"A few minutes," said Mary Littenham, smiling down at her father's perturbed face. "It's all right, I don't mind exercising my lungs."

"Yes, but I didn't hear you; there ought to be some arrangement made so that a person under the pond could hear every sound in this vicinity . . . a dictaphone . . . something of that sort. . . ."

"Why, I don't mind . . . it's of no importance."

"It isn't you at all, it is to complete what has been started. A man should always be cognizant of his surroundings. . . ." The financier peered around, evidently looking for some way to install a sound amplifier in the vault under his lake. "Why are you at home this time of day?" he inquired in an aside.

"I've quit the *Tribune*," she answered absently, pondering how she would ask her father the question she had in her thoughts.

"You understand newspapers now?" he inquired with the slightest trace of irony in his dry voice.

"Well, I don't not understand as much as I did."

"Modest, modest . . . quite modest," in a tone which maintained its satirical tinge but which nevertheless was colored with admiration. "That's more than your brother knows about them, Mary. What are you going to do next?"

"I had thought about the bank."

"You would have to stay in the bank longer than three or four months to learn much about it."

"Yes, I know that . . . as I say, I haven't decided positively on the bank. . . . Oh, Father, in the Westover Bank, did the directors, at a meeting, vote you and themselves some bonuses?"

"How came you to know anything about that?"

"Well, did you?"

"You tell me first how you arrived at your information."

"I can't."

"Why?"

"I didn't promise anyone I wouldn't tell; there wouldn't be any fun to it."

The smallish father of the large girl came out of his retreat into the sunshine.

"Your generation, Mary Grace, seems to believe all wit lies in nonsense. If by strain and stress you achieve a sentence that means absolutely nothing——"

"Oh, by the way," interrupted the girl, laughing at her father's dry superciliousness, "that reminds me. I don't believe I'll try the bank next after all. Could you get me the private secretaryship to that new congressman with the funny name?"

"What new—oh, Caridius?"

"Yes."

"Why did you think of him?"

"You speaking of a sentence that meant absolutely nothing made me think of politicians, and politicians are one of the things I would like to know a little something about."

"Your hypothesis is quite wrong," interrupted Mr. Littenham. "The most rambling sentence a politician ever

utters is simply his professional way of never trying to pick a winner until the race is over. It isn't meaningless at all: it is a philosophy of life."

"You did get that bonus from the bank after all, Father."

"Why, how do you know?"

"You are feeling fine today. You are wisecracking all over the place."

The thin rather dry man looked at his daughter with a hint of humorous secrecy in his light gray eyes.

"What do you want to know about bonuses . . . in the abstract?"

"How you get them."

"Why, we vote them to ourselves."

"Don't the stockholders object?"

"Most of them don't know anything about it."

"Well, those that do."

"Mary Grace," said the smallish man more seriously, "that is a proper question. The stockholders of a modern corporation are a changing group of gamblers who are betting on whether or not a certain corporation will make money. If we make money——"

"Who are we?"

"Why, the officers and board of directors. If we make money the stock goes up and the shareholders take their profit by the sale of their stock in open market."

"But if the company makes money aren't the shareholders supposed to get——"

"I don't know who supposes it. I am talking of the realities of modern corporate business, Mary Grace, as it can be manipulated under our present laws. I was not discussing the pentecost. Now the money we plowed back into the trust company this year: that goes to the benefit of the common stockholder . . . indirectly, of course."

Miss Littenham admired her father. She admired the brittleness of his attack. It reminded her faintly of the priest she had just interviewed in the Italian quarter. Both used the same sort of implication. And her father, really, was

quite as religious in his way as the priest. He never entered any major financial operation without resorting to prayer, very earnest sincere prayer. He explained to God what he was going to do. And by the time he could make the deity understand it, he himself had a comprehensive view of the whole matter.

The financier now returned to a prior subject and asked his daughter why she wanted to be secretary to Caridius, who had just been elected to Congress.

"Because I'll get in on the ground floor. He knows absolutely nothing about Congress, and I'll learn as fast as he will."

The oldish gentleman cleared his throat.

"And a good deal faster. . . . What do you want to learn politics for?"

The girl became serious.

"Because, as I understand it, the politicians are the liaison men between the persons who own this country and the people who work for them. I just want to see the connection, that's all."

The master of the estate stooped and reclosed the opening from which he had just emerged, ordering the dog back while he did it.

"If I didn't have confidence in your extraordinarily well-balanced mind, Mary Grace, I would forbid you to dabble in politics."

"Oh, then you can arrange the secretaryship?"

The oldish gentleman gave a slight deprecatory shrug.

"I have contributed materially to the campaign expenses of Andrew Blanke."

"Yes, but this Mr. Caridius was an opponent to Blanke."

"Well, I didn't contribute directly to Blanke, I arranged the matter with old Krauseman, and Krauseman . . ." he nodded at his daughter . . . "you know how that sort of thing goes . . . he was probably backing both candidates in the race. I'll call up Krauseman when we get to the house."

And the two started walking up a long open vista to the towers of Pine Manor, followed by the gigantic harlequin.

17

OUT OF THE ENTRANCE to the House of Congress in the southern wing of the Capitol building in the city of Washington, the Honorable Henry Lee Caridius emerged in company with a score or more of brother congressmen.

The group said little, and when they spoke their voices were lowered and somewhat gray in color, as befitted those who have just spoken in commemoration of the dead.

Representative Bing nodded gravely to Caridius at his side. "A very fine man, Mr. Caridius, an able jurist, an incorruptible lawmaker, an exalted patriot, an affectionate friend."

Representative Bing's thoughts still moved in the rhythmic periods he had just used in his memorial address in the House.

"I never had the privilege of knowing him personally," said Caridius.

"It was a very great privilege," assured Bing, and both men felt that while to know the living congressmen, who were at that moment coming out of the door with them, was no privilege at all, to have known the Honorable Andrew Blanke deceased was indeed a rare intellectual and spiritual treat.

After a decent pause Caridius said to Bing:

"I'm hunting a house, a place to stay in."

Mr. Bing shook his head.

"You've come to the worst place in the world for living quarters. . . . Where are you staying now?"

"I flew over from my home this morning, I'm going back now."

"Flew over? Umph! How long did it take you?"

"About an hour and a quarter."

Mr. Bing composed to thought a broad and somewhat mask-like face with which, for some reason, nearly all politicians are endowed.

"That isn't much time to spend traveling."

"Not at all, and it was very comfortable and interesting."

"Had you thought of commuting?"

"From Megapolis to Washington?"

"Yes, a number of our congressmen commute from outlying towns."

"Isn't it inconvenient?"

"Well, the mileage allowance takes care of the inconvenience. In fact, inconvenience, Mr. Caridius, is a relative term, and very often those things that at first blush appear inconvenient turn out to be——"

"How much is the mileage allowance from Megapolis?" interposed Caridius, yielding to that continual temptation of a Northern congressman to interrupt the apparently unending sentences of a congressman from the South.

"It's eighteen cents a mile . . . let me see . . . Megapolis is a hundred and fifty miles . . . that would be eighteen plus nine . . . twenty-seven dollars . . . each way . . . that's fifty-four dollars a day."

"That's more than my salary," ejaculated Caridius.

"Your honorarium, sir, is in payment for your time and energy spent in the halls of Congress; your mileage is a perquisite that attaches to your transition to and from those halls. Their relative values may be correctly reflected in the two rates of compensation."

Caridius did not respond in kind to the Southern habit of launching a satirical attack upon a friend for no reason in

the world. He stuck to the Northern custom of computing the money actually in hand.

"Why, the round-trip flying fare down here was only twelve dollars and fifty cents."

"That allows a comfortable margin."

"But wouldn't the actual fare have something to do with the mileage?"

"My dear sir," said Mr. Bing, lifting the somewhat heavyish skin of his forehead, "the members of Congress voted themselves an eighteen-cent mileage in the days of coaches and eight. Today Congress is under no more obligation to mark down to the taxpaying public any reduction brought about by science and invention in their mileage than the manufacturers are obliged to mark down goods when they discover cheap methods of production. In both cases profit takes up the slack and the price to the public remains the same."

"I don't believe I quite want to do that," pondered Caridius. "I was sent up here on an economy program."

"Most of us arrive here on an economy program."

"Well, I think we ought to watch expenses."

"This is an excellent place to watch them."

At this moment a countryman coming up the long flight of steps of the Capitol caught the Honorable Bing's eye. The Southerner wrinkled his brow studiously for a moment, then called out in a hearty voice:

"Well, well, well, Bill Lumpkins . . . how are you, Bill? How's your good wife, Miss Annie . . . and your two boys, Sam and Jim? And how're all the rest of my friends down in Cornersville?"

The somewhat dubious expression on the face of the countryman vanished.

"Why, hello, Josiah. I drove around up here to the Capitol to see if I could see you." And the two walked away together.

That afternoon, when Caridius embarked for home at the

Washington airport, a number of other passengers entered the plane and strung themselves along the seats. As the station bell rang the ship's departure a small brown man hurried aboard, came up the narrow aisle and chose the seat beside Caridius.

For a moment the new congressman felt the human reaction that the late passenger might just as well have chosen a seat somewhere else than the one exactly beside his own. The small oriental would, more or less, disturb his flow of thought.

A few minutes later, when the motors increased their tempo and the ship started taxi-ing into the wind, the yellow man slipped out of Caridius' mind. His thoughts were picked up in that interval of interest when one's airplane leaves the ground, and the station, the field, the bordering trees and houses shrink from normal-sized realities to the details on a huge misty relief map.

When his ship had gained this altitude, the view presently symbolized in Caridius' fancy the political elevation to which he had been lifted. It came to him oddly that here was he, Henry Lee Caridius, suddenly given a voice in the happiness and prosperity of every home that drifted beneath the far-flung anthem of the motors. People he would never know; people who would never know him, would in some degree depend upon his judgment and decisions to shape their destinies. A feeling almost of solemnity came over Caridius. He was moved to resolutions of earnestness, application and faithfulness. His own littleness and unpreparedness reproached him, and his thoughts gravitated toward that Timeless Helper of all men when they are humbled. With His aid, the politician resolved to do all that he could in the position in which he found himself.

In Caridius' mind, when he thought directly of God like this, he ordinarily imagined a group of sacred negatives; immortal, unbounded, not flesh, incomprehensible; but now he lifted mental hands out of humility to pity and an understanding love.

Then, while the shape of this involuntary prayer still lingered in his mind, his thoughts slid away to his mileage rate of eighteen cents. He thought how salutary it would be for the moral and spiritual health of every congressman to be borne aloft each day to this spiritual Pisgah which he had reached. He thought if he could fly back and forth from Washington every day it would be well worth in the expansion and cleansing of his soul what it cost the country.

Amid these high and selfless considerations Caridius turned impulsively to his seat mate.

"Aren't these ships wonderful . . . to step on an Aladdin's carpet and be borne instantly through the air? . . ."

The small man nodded and replied in a precise English:

"Legends and fairy tales are men . . . mankind . . . looking into a mirror. What they see as the past is the future."

Caridius was pleased with the figure.

"It's a great pleasure to think that the human race learned to fly in America."

"Twice they did," observed the yellow man. "Flying perhaps is in the air of the New World."

The politician smiled.

"How twice?"

"The Mayas, I have been told, invented airplanes without motors . . . gliders."

"The Mayas . . . I didn't know that . . . where did you find it out?"

"From some American archæologists in Central America."

"You were down there?"

"I flew down there for a week-end, but the mosquitoes bit me so I flew back." The small man's almond eyes expressed mirth.

"Did you fly down just for pleasure or business?"

"Pleasure. Mosquitoes would not have run me away from business. I would have taken quinine."

There was something affable and gently humorous about the little man that put Caridius on a friendly footing with

him at once; then, too, their height in the air made for informality.

"I judge you would have done a good business in Central America."

"Why so?" inquired the small man, interested.

"The Spanish-Americans go in for jewelry and antiques and objects of art."

The little brown man smiled and produced a card.

"My business is not bijouterie . . . quite the opposite, in fact: machinery, dynamos, explosives, steam shovels. . . ."

Caridius was startled in a kind of national manner.

"You are not in America selling explosives and steam shovels manufactured in Japan?"

"Oh no, I am a buyer."

"Oh, a buyer," ejaculated the congressman with a national warming up to his fellow passenger; then he read the card in his fingers:

SHIOKE AND COMPANY
Mining Operators
KIRIN, MANCHUKUO

MR. KUMATA,
Representative.

Caridius produced his own card, drew out his fountain pen and considered how to amend it, and added the letters M. C. after his name.

"I have just come to Washington," he explained and made a mental note to purchase some proper cards.

"Oh!" ejaculated the little man, inclining his sleek blue-black head, and drawing in his breath.

Caridius was rather set up over this moral result. It occurred to him for the first time that perhaps a foreigner might hold an American congressman in honor.

"So you are buying in this country," observed Caridius in that repetitious interlude which bridges the beginning of an acquaintance. Here Jim Essary and the explosive he had for sale popped into Caridius' head. He drew breath to mention the inventor, but thought better of it and changed it to:

"I suppose your company is in development work in Manchukuo?"

"Yes," nodded the little man with a pleased expression.

Here Caridius felt that, being a member of Congress, he ought to obtain all the information he could on the Eastern situation.

"What influence do you think your communistic neighbor will have on Manchukuo?"

"None," replied the little man placidly.

"But if communism works?"

"Manchukuo is Japan," returned the little man as if he had the matter all thought out. "Japan is crowded; Germany is crowded; Italy is crowded. No crowded nation can be communistic. A people expands more efficiently under . . . what do you call it? . . . an absolute monarch. A people must take the political form necessary for it to live. Democracy, personal liberty, is a luxury which only a nation with a wide estate can afford. . . . What was it you almost said to me a moment ago?"

The Honorable Henry Caridius clumsily realized that Mr. Kumata had given him this excerpt from his private political economy without thinking of the matter at all; his attention really had been focused on the thing which he, Caridius, had not said.

"Well, what was it I almost said?" asked Caridius a little amused and trying to think their conversation backwards.

"You were telling me at the time that I was buying in this country."

"Telling you . . . why you already knew that!"

"Yes, I know, but you were saying to me, 'So you are buying in this country,' and it reminded you of something."

"Oh!" ejaculated Caridius, suddenly remembering what it was.

"Yes, that's it!"

"Why, I had just thought of a friend of mine, a Mr. Essary, who had invented a new explosive . . . you know, you saying you were interested in explosives?"

"Yes?"

"But I didn't go on with it because I remembered it was not a commercial explosive."

"Oh, I see. Well, that's unfortunate."

"Yes, I knew your company would not be interested in that."

"No-o . . . I don't suppose they would. . . . I wonder if he could change it, make it into something we could use?"

"That, of course, I don't know. My chemistry is high-school chemistry."

"Where does he live?"

"Out near the munitions plant; in one of those monotonous streets. . . . His name's Essary."

"How do you spell it?"

"James Essary . . . E-s-s-a-r-y."

The small man drew out a little book and copied the name.

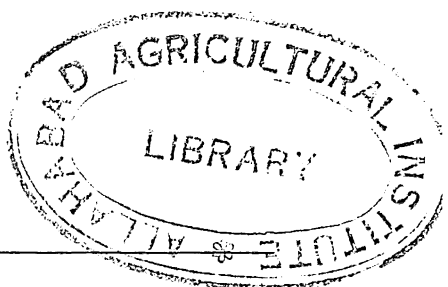
"If he could turn his explosive to commercial uses" he suggested doubtfully.

"That I don't know."

The little man shook his head still more doubtfully and sat looking out of the porthole at the blue reaches of America spread emptily beneath them.



18



WHEN THE AIRSHIP eased down out of the sky at the Megapolis airport, there arose the customary flutter from the spectators behind the gate. A smiling, triumphant young woman waved to Caridius. They made their way to each other and shook hands.

"How were the memorial addresses?" asked the girl.

"Impressive, Connie, impressive," said Caridius with dignity.

"Well, Washington isn't much of a town in itself, but there's something about it . . . focus of our national life sort of thing."

"International, too . . . look . . . don't look right now . . . in a minute . . . see that little Jap . . . one of the most widely informed, entertaining men."

"You met him in Washington?"

"No, just now, on the ship. . . . He's with a development company in Manchukuo."

"You are going to have a great time in Washington, Henry, broaden your horizon. In fact, Washington is a town of horizons. Nothing much in the middle, but the horizons are broad."

"All of us are going to have a great time in Washington," said Caridius significantly. "All of our horizons are going to be broadened."

Satisfaction filled Connie at this implicit promise to take her into his office.

Caridius himself gave a moment's thought to a possible opposition from his wife to this arrangement, but he felt that surely ordinary justice and decency would force Ellora to agree to Connie's appointment.

"By the way, did you get a telegram from me in Washington?" inquired the girl.

"No, what about?" asked Caridius.

"I invited you to a dinner at the Ambassador."

Caridius was dismayed. Connie Stott had a way of giving dinners if she managed to get twenty dollars ahead.

"Look here, Connie, you shouldn't have——"

"Oh, it wasn't I, the whole club did it . . . the Independent Voters' Alliance."

Caridius was moved at the tribute.

"Why, that's fine of the bunch . . . it really is."

The new congressman called a taxicab, and the two entered. The man hoped subconsciously that Miss Stott would get out downtown somewhere and allow him to go on to his apartment in the Albemarle alone. He didn't want Ellora to see him driving up with Connie Stott. He would have difficulty enough in persuading Ellora to agree to Connie's secretaryship with Connie absent. If Connie were there in her large and enthusiastic flesh he knew the situation would be hopeless.

"Look here, Henry," began the girl with the frankness of man to man, "just how much would I have to know to be of service in an office?"

"Oh, you know enough."

"Would I have to know stenography?"

"Well, that might help. . . . You don't know it, do you?"

"No, I don't. And if I can't do the work I wouldn't want to take the position. You see . . . well . . . our Independent Voters' Alliance have preached efficiency and honesty in politics for so long I simply wouldn't have the cheek to be an inefficient cog."

The politician patted her hand reassuringly.

"Oh, that's all right, we can get another girl to come in and take dictation: you know, some ordinary girl whose ability is just about limited to scratching pothooks on a pad of paper."

While they were talking the taxicab reached the downtown district, and Caridius suggested invitingly:

"Could I put you out somewhere down here?"

"Why no," returned Connie warmly, "I thought I would run up with you to your apartment and give Mrs. Caridius a personal invitation to the dinner."

"Yes, yes, that's very thoughtful."

"I know Mrs. Caridius enjoys all the little punctilios," observed the large girl.

"I hate for you to put yourself to so much trouble."

"No, really, I have nothing else to do."

Caridius was half minded to tell Miss Stott frankly that his wife was jealous of her and plan with her some impersonal behavior that would allay Ellora's suspicions. But he himself was very much ashamed of the situation. And then it would sound idiotic to plan with such an open and above-board friend to conduct themselves toward each other with impersonal reserve.

At the Albemarle Apartments, Miss Stott went in with Caridius and proffered her invitation.

Ellora thanked her prospective hostess in a low sweet voice and said she didn't know whether she ought to go or not . . . would there be any women at the dinner?

Miss Stott was a little taken aback.

"Why ye-es. . ."

"I mean, are the other members going to bring their wives?" inquired Ellora.

"No," laughed the large girl, "the other members are going to bring their husbands."

Caridius smiled at Miss Stott's placating attitude and thought her answer was rather clever.

"Oh, then in that instance I'll come and bring mine," accepted Ellora with a compressed smile.

Caridius was pleased that the matter had come off so well. When Miss Stott was gone he thought it would be a good time to broach the large girl's secretaryship.

"You know, Ellora," he began diplomatically, "we owe a good deal to Connie Stott, and if we could repay her some way . . ."

"Don't worry," returned Ellora in a strained voice, "she will repay herself."

"Why . . . what do you mean?"

"Didn't you hear her insult me just now?"

Caridius looked to see if she meant this and was amazed to see by her whitened face that she was furiously angry.

"I suppose I did, but I didn't hear anything to insult anyone."

"Didn't you hear her say the other members were going to bring their husbands?"

"Why sure, I thought that was pretty——"

"Why that 'other' . . . 'other members'? . . . That left me out. The other members were going to bring their husbands but my husband was going to bring me. I am to be the nobody, the dish rag, the homeless cat at her five-and-ten dinner!"

"Why, my God," cried Caridius in frustration, "she didn't mean that at all!"

"I know what she meant! I know what women mean when they come following you around so you can't even get home from a trip alone!"

Caridius could never answer any of his wife's accusations because no matter what argument he presented she always replied to it with a completely new charge, and if he tried to answer the second one she presented a third, and so on indefinitely. Ellora considered herself in her moments of repose an extremely versatile debater, and she always believed that she would have made a better politician than her husband.

Caridius himself finally became irritated, and he told his wife that he was under political obligations to give the secre-

taryship in his office in Congress to Connie. He said he not only owed the position to Connie for what she had done for him, but their whole club expected Connie to obtain the post, and if he did not give it to her he would lose the very political foundation upon which he stood.

Naturally he did not say this all at one go. He required a dozen or more starts, broken by all manner of charges from his wife, some of which reached back to dalliances Caridius had committed before his marriage.

In the midst of this the telephone rang. Ellora cried:

"There's that telephone again . . . another woman wanting you. She's been wanting you all day long, asking when you'll be back."

"Who is she?"

"She wouldn't tell me . . . she said she lived in California. That's all I could get out of her. Henry Caridius, who do you know in California?"

"Why, the devil, Ellora, nobody . . . nobody!" He flung out his hands hopelessly, and he thought disgustedly, as he went to the telephone, that he could commit adultery with another woman with greater purity of heart and innocence before his Maker than Ellora could disapprove of the act. He placed the receiver to his ear and smoothed out his voice.

"Hello, this is Henry Caridius."

"All right, hold the wire, Mr. Caridius," answered a woman.

"Who is this?" asked Caridius.

"It's California."

Caridius thought bewilderedly who could be calling him from California . . . some political power, perhaps, who had heard of his election.

"I mean who are you?"

"I'm California, Mr. Krauseman's maid. Mr. Krauseman wants to talk to you."

And suddenly Caridius remembered the Negro maid and her odd name. He began laughing, and while the girl had gone for her master he ejaculated quickly:

"Krauseman wants to see me . . . his maid's name is California, that was why she couldn't make you understand who she was."

"Why, I still don't understand. Why couldn't she have said her name was——"

"Why, when she said, 'This is California,' you thought it was the . . . Hello . . . hello, Mr. Krauseman. This is Henry Caridius. I am sorry I was away when you called up earlier. . . . Yes . . . in Washington. . . . Oh, the services were very impressive, very impressive indeed. . . . I see. You wanted to see me about that? Well, I had intended to give the place to Miss Stott. Yes, Miss Connie Stott. . . . Why, because she has done so much for my campaign. . . . Well, she got the sound wagon from you for one thing. . . . Yes . . . yes, I'll admit that *you* lent her the wagon . . . and it was *your* attention that she drew to me. Yes. Yes. Well, who did you have in mind?"

Came a long pause during which Caridius listened incredulously. Ellora watched with triumph in her face.

"Oh yes," she said in an undertone, "he doesn't want Connie Stott to have it!"

Caridius maintained his silence for a few moments longer and then broke out:

"But, Mr. Krauseman, why would Miss Littenham want . . . Yes . . . yes, I know her father contributed to Andrew Blanke's campaign fund. . . . Yes, I suppose I'll need his contribution too, if I should decide to run again, but why in the world should Miss Lit . . . Well, yes, I suppose it is her own business . . . I hate to do it. . . . Why yes, yes, if it's that important. Good Lord, a secretaryship. . . . Good-bye."

He put up the receiver and turned to his wife blankly.

"Miss Littenham, Miss Mary Littenham has asked to be my private secretary."

"Who is she?"

"Daughter of Merritt Littenham, the financier. Now, because he contributed to Andrew Blanke's campaign when *he*

ran against *me*, now, damn it, I've got to pay off his political obligations."

Ellora flared up, this time at the injustice done her husband.

"Why, I wouldn't do it! I wouldn't think of doing it! Mary Littenham has done nothing for you. I'd give it to Connie Stott . . . she has worked for you."

Caridius made a gesture.

"Oh, Krauseman says that Littenham simply contributes to a fund to elect somebody, anybody that Krauseman selects, but of course the person selected must make some returns for the favors Littenham extends. Now, I'm that person, and the fund will always be there as long as—as I'm there."

"Well, I can see that," nodded Ellora dubiously, "but it does seem if Connie helped you she ought to—to be considered." Ellora's original impulse toward justice weakened as she remembered her own distaste for Miss Stott.

Krauseman's ill-timed and apparently unfair request completely spoiled the dinner. It posed for Caridius two or three very difficult problems. The gravest was how he would break the bad news to Connie Stott. The second, how he could justify this very necessary concession to Krauseman before the other members of the Independent Voters' Alliance. The dinner took place under these heavy mortgages on gayety and pleasure. Before the company went in to the table Caridius took Sol Myerberg off to one side and explained the situation to him.

"Of course, I could just go ahead and engage the person I wanted and owed a debt to, but you know I can't conscientiously impair my future as a representative of the people, free from machine control, merely to appoint some particular woman as my private secretary."

"Sure, I think you are right," encouraged the lawyer. "The fight was to seat a free congressman, not a free private secretary to a congressman."

"Listen, Sol," begged Caridius, "could you tell Connie for me? Hell, I can't just go up to her and say, 'Connie,

in order to preserve the gains our alliance has made, I've got to——' ”

The lawyer lifted an agreeable hand.

“Don't worry your head about it a minute longer. I'll arrange it with her.”

Caridius watched Myerberg approach Connie with a cocktail and draw her aside. Caridius approved of this step. With three or four sufficiently potent cocktails the matter could be arranged at least for the evening and the dinner saved.

The new congressman was so perturbed over the situation that his attention was really centered uneasily on Connie and Sol throughout the dinner. He did hear vaguely Sawbrey's toast before the long table was seated:

“Here is to the resurrection from the tomb of indifference of that political Lazarus, the average American voter.”

There was applause and a clinking of glasses at this. Then came a toast from the other end of the table to freedom from machine control.

To Caridius the ironic part of it was that they really had gained a freedom from machine control, but if the group before him knew that he was sacrificing Connie Stott to the machine they would condemn him. They would not be able to see that all successful politics were concessions of minor ends for major ends. He hated to think he would likely lose the respect of his fellow members when he was performing the very task they had set him up to accomplish.

When the evening drew to an uncomfortable end and the guests were preparing to go home, Caridius directed his steps toward Connie Stott in a desire to see what progress Myerberg had made. The large girl, however, avoided him, and he guessed that the lawyer's diplomacy had not been very successful.

Caridius found his wife, and they started for the door amid the general good wishes of the crowd. When he found a chance he whispered to his wife:

“Connie has found out and she's angry at me.”

"How do you know she has found out?" asked Ellora.

"Myerberg told her, I asked him to tell her."

"Isn't that a shame!"

"But I asked him to tell her."

"Listen, give the job to the girl anyway. Pay no attention to Krauseman. Listen, I'll go straighten the matter up with Connie."

Caridius saw that his wife had taken too many cocktails.

"No, that's all right, let her alone. What are you going to say to her?"

"I'm going to tell her she can't put any confidence in a Jew."

"Why, the devil, no!" protested Caridius in a sharp undertone. "Come on with me."

"No, I won't go with you, I'll make everything straight with Connie . . . she's my friend . . . Connie . . . oh, Connie."

Ellora got the large woman's attention and beckoned earnestly.

Miss Stott was really not the sort of woman who liked to talk to other women. She preferred men. Now she approached Ellora already bored with what the small petite blonde was about to say.

"Connie," said the little woman earnestly, "don't believe everything Mr. Myerberg says, you can't put any confidence in a——"

The stout lawyer himself angled in toward Caridius and said in a tone loud enough and embracing enough to include Connie and Ellora:

"Caridius, suppose you and Mrs. Caridius come to the office with me and Connie."

"You and Connie?" questioned the congressman surprised.

"Yes, particularly because we are going to see a friend of yours."

"A friend of mine?"

"Certainly . . . Essary . . . you remember recommending our firm to Essary?"

"Ye-es . . . but do you want me and the girls to go along with you at this time of night to see Essary?"

"I want you and your wife to go along with me and Connie. We want to celebrate, and at the same time Connie wants to explain a little nonfeasance on her part. She's rather cut up about it."

"Why, what is it?" inquired the congressman, looking at the tall girl.

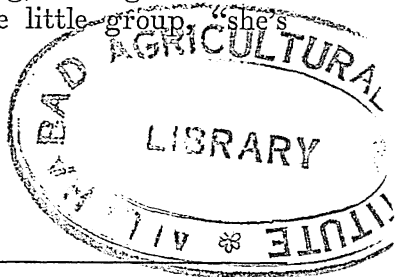
"Sol will tell you, he promised me he would," said Connie with a flustered smile.

"Why, the truth is," explained the lawyer, "Connie is not going to be able to take that secretaryship you offered her, Caridius. She . . . uh . . . regrets it, but . . . uh . . . circumstances . . ." He made the kind of gesture he would have used before a jury.

"Well, what is she going to do?" asked Caridius in the half-angry and entirely disappointed tone which he considered a proper follow-up to Myerberg's lead.

"Why, the truth is," said Myerberg, smiling . . . he lowered his voice to include only the little group, "she's going to marry me."

19



SOL MYERBERG's announcement that he was to marry Cornelia Stott set up one or two sharp and contradictory reactions in the Honorable Henry Caridius.

The congressman's first reaction was, "My God, what a friend, marry the girl to take her off my hands!" Then he felt a qualm about the outcome of the marriage of a Jew and

a Gentile. The clinical history of such unions had a habit of running along, "Getting along fine . . . he's just as good to her as he can be . . . wrapped up in each other . . . their decree in divorce was handed down about a week ago."

But beyond all this the Honorable Henry Caridius sensed in the future, in his own future, a dryness, an emotional desiccation which he now knew would not have been there had Connie Stott accepted his private secretaryship in Washington. The fact that he could not have given her the position in the first instance somehow in no degree softened the intangible blow which he had received.

So now he rode along in a taxicab with Sol and Connie, on their way to the Lecksher Building, in a silent, half-ironic and deprived mood. He kept thinking to himself that he could not have employed Connie even if she weren't going to marry. More than that, even if she had come to his office in Washington, nothing would have arisen out of their work together. He was true to his wife, indeed, most happily married to Ellora, and Connie was as straightforward a girl as any man would care to see . . . nothing at all would have come of it . . . not a thing in the world.

Ellora was not with them in the cab. She had said she was sleepy and had gone home. Myerberg and Connie talked briskly to Caridius to atone for thinking so exclusively about each other.

"You will live in Washington, of course?" suggested the lawyer. "You knew, of course, Connie, that Caridius is now a member of my firm."

"Why, that's delightful!"

"I'm flying to Washington tomorrow morning to look around for a place to live," said Caridius in answer to the lawyer's first question.

"You ought to put off your trip and stay over to Canarelli's trial, it comes up tomorrow," suggested Connie.

"He is hardly interested in that," said the lawyer.

"Interested, of course he is . . . it's part of the reform he stands for!"

The short stout man drew out and lighted a cigar with the self-conscious enjoyment men of his race take in physical things.

"I explained to you, Connie, that when a reform ticket elects its candidate the reform is over."

"You didn't explain it, you said it," contradicted Connie with the bright pertness an engaged girl uses even if she be quite a large woman and the rôle doesn't fit very well.

The Jew blew out a skein of smoke.

"Explanation's very simple. A political reaction of the minor variety is never brought about by fraud, corruption or injustice. The people are used to that. They have it among them all the time. No, what pulls them out to the polls is the drama of a solitary Saint George riding forth to slay the dragon of corruption. That's what moves the people . . . good theater. And when he's elected, the show's over and they all go home. And of course they give the dragon a rest so he will be in shape for the next exhibition."

Miss Stott shook her head in admiring reproach.

"That's funny, Sol, but it isn't American."

"Why, I'll leave it to Caridius there, it is the most American thing. . . ."

"It violates the very principles of democracy," persisted Connie.

"Certainly, but don't you come over to my side of this argument. I said it was American first."

By this time the trio had reached the Lecksher Building and entered its great corridor, where a single night elevator was in service. The night man took them to the fifteenth floor, where Myerberg entered his office and switched on the lights.

"I'll leave the door open," he said, "so Essary will see the light and know which suite to come to." He turned about, arranged a chair for Miss Stott, waved Caridius to another. He stood before the two.

"Caridius, do you know why I select, prefer and desire Connie Stott above all the other women in the world?"

"Sol!" deprecated Miss Stott, smiling; then she added to Caridius half apologetically, "He's in a big way tonight."

"I have a right to be in a big way!"

"You have," agreed Caridius seriously: "it's because you are in love with her."

"Oh, what a reasoning in a circle! I tell him I'm in love with her and ask him why and he says it's because I'm in love with her. Really! Really! Is this the man I have taken to my heart as a law partner? Is this he whom I have chosen above all men to be my ally on forensic battlefields?"

"Then I give it up, I don't know why you do."

"It's because Connie comes nearer to the ancient Greek hetairae than any woman in Megapolis."

"Do you mean I'm a demi-mondaine?" asked Connie composedly.

"The sexual element was a mere detail to the rounded attractions of the hetairae. They had an artistic and a political outlook as well. They were probably the women who most perfectly satisfied masculine desires that the world has ever known."

It had never occurred to Caridius before, but it now struck him that this was true of Connie Stott.

"Then why didn't the hetairae persist if they were so perfectly adapted to men?" inquired the politician.

"Because the women here in our Western world have turned the tables around and have developed men who more perfectly satisfy feminine desires than any the world has ever known."

Both Connie and Caridius broke out laughing at this, when the politician saw Essary enter the open door of the suite. Caridius advanced toward his old schoolfellow and then saw entering with Essary a short, compact yellow man who appeared familiar.

Essary began an introduction of his companion, but when he came to Caridius the small man bowed and said:

"I flew from Washington to this city with Mr. Caridius."

"Certainly, Mr. Kumata," remembered Caridius, extend-

ing his hand. "I spoke of you to Miss Stott," and he presented the little yellow man to the tall girl.

"I hate to introduce business into this group," said Es-sary to Caridius, "but I would like to see you and Mr. Myer-berg a moment, if Miss Stott and Mr. Kumata will excuse you?"

The small yellow man bowed and joined Miss Stott at the window. He followed the woman's gaze out into the night, where the city lay spangled with lights.

"It looks like an ebony jewel box," observed Mr. Kumata in his careful English. "As we came in I thought Mr. Myer-berg was saying something about this being a woman's world . . . the box belongs to her."

"I'm sorry I can't agree," said Connie soberly. "I know of a case where a girl was spirited away because she was a witness in a criminal trial."

"What do you think has been done with her?" asked the little man impassively.

"I don't know . . . murdered, perhaps . . . used in the vice racket."

"The vice racket itself would suggest this is a woman's world," observed Mr. Kumata: "that is a feminine idea."

"That harlotry is a vice?"

"Certainly, no man originated that idea. A man hardly would, you know."

"Well, I knew of course that your country didn't look on it in the same light that we do."

The Japanese thought a moment and then asked:

"Don't you think it would be better for girls to enter the profession of love voluntarily and be able to withdraw voluntarily than to enter through disgrace or wantonness or under the compulsion of bodily force?"

"The law should stop it entirely," said the girl reformer; "it shouldn't be permitted at all."

"You feel that way because your country is large and prosperous and not overpopulated."

"I don't see what that has to do with it."

"I mean your laws and morals have not been forced to look upon young men and indigent men and ill-mated men as a class. No honorable provision is made for such men. If America saw her population as classes and not as individuals, some such honorable arrangement would be made, and then no girl would be spirited away and forced into vice any more than she would be forced into being a trained nurse or a florist."

"But, look here, don't you think it is shameful for a girl to commercialize her body? Don't you think she should marry for love?"

"Don't you think it would be better for her to sell her body for a short time so she could marry some poor man she loved rather than become the permanent wife of some rich old man? Would not that be better for the race? Yet in America the latter is considered honorable while the former is dishonorable."

At this point they were interrupted by Myerberg opening the door of his private office and calling Kumata. The Japanese excused himself ceremoniously and joined the other three men. Miss Stott called out that she would be going, and Myerberg begged her to content herself with magazines and papers until he could finish his business.

When the Japanese entered the private office, Myerberg shut the door and said in a disappointed voice:

"Mr. Essary has decided not to sell his invention, Mr. Kumata, I am very sorry to tell you."

"I have no right to inquire what he is going to do with it?" asked the almond-eyed man looking at Essary.

The three Americans glanced at each other.

"I see no reason why that shouldn't be told?" queried the lawyer. As there was no dissension he went on: "He has decided to dispose of it to the War Department of the United States."

Mr. Kumata lifted his brows. "If it is purely a war product my company would not be interested in it anyway."

"It is a war product," reaffirmed Essary.

"Well, if you don't get this, Mr. Kumata," comforted Myerberg, "maybe Mr. Essary will turn out something he can sell you."

"Let us hope so."

"He is working on some kind of an electrical contrivance now," said Myerberg.

"Electrical?" interrogated Kumata with renewed interest.

"A little gadget he tells me he is using now to kill cock-roaches in his sink," said Myerberg looking at Essary, who nodded assent.

Here the conversation was interrupted by the buzz of a bell.

"I wonder who that is. . . ." Myerberg looked out of his office toward the open door of his suite.

A small carefully dressed man with shining black marcelled hair stood in the entrance. "Joe, if you'll have a seat in that chair . . ." called the lawyer.

The three men and Miss Stott began making their adieus. Myerberg protested against Miss Stott's going, but Caridius said he would drop her at her home as he took a cab to his apartment house. The group went out together.

"Now, Joe, you've cost me a taxi ride with my girl," complained the lawyer.

"Put it in the bill."

"Come on in here. What's your trouble?"

"How about my trial tomorrow?"

"Well, there's nothing to it."

"How about the young lady witness against me who belongs to the machine?"

"I'm going to marry her."

"Oh?"

"Yes."

"How about the congressman who is going to prosecute me?"

"He is a member of this firm who is going to conduct your defense."

"M-huh."

"And now what else do you want to see me about?"

"Well . . . about the other witness against me."

"You mean . . ."

"The Estovia girl."

"Well, I don't see what you are coming to see me about."

Canarelli lowered his voice:

"I am going to send her away."

"Send her away?"

"Ship her. . . . I want to get her a passport to South America . . . the Argentine . . . there's a demand for girls."

Myerberg began shaking his head slowly.

"I can't help you get a passport. I stay outside of that. If you get a passport and get caught, then you come to me. . . . But say, why in the hell do you want to take such a risk?"

"I can't let her go."

"No-o."

"And I can't use her here in any of my places."

"Why can't you?"

"Because, damn it, she's got her beads with her!"

"Her beads!"

"Yes, and if any man goes into her room she begins going over her beads, and our customer comes out and asks us what the hell."

Myerberg made a gesture.

"Why don't you take her beads away from her?"

"Hell, I don't want to fool with beads, I need all the luck I can get in this game. I don't want to give myself a wrong steer by going against beads."

Myerberg began laughing.

"I swear, the superstition of you Gentiles!"

"Superstition hell! They've kept Paula Estovia sleeping by herself so far. If they bring her that good luck, why can't they bring me bad luck?"

"Why, you damn fool, don't you see it's what you yourself

think about her beads . . ." Myerberg threw up his hands. "My God, how you Gentiles have corrupted with superstition the pure austere religion of us Jews!"

20

ON THE FOLLOWING DAY the trial of the State versus Joseph Canarelli was dismissed because the principal witnesses for the State were absent.

Sol Myerberg, attorney for the defense, expressed himself as very disappointed in this outcome of the action. He had wanted to prove, he said, not that the charge of sabotage was false, but the much more fundamental issue that the Syrup Manufacturers' Protective Association was a bona fide organization of syrup manufacturers designed for their own protection. As to the detail of discipline within the Association itself: whether that exceeded the sanctions of the law he had meant to leave to the discretion of the court.

Antonia and Paula Estovia were absent, he said, but the Estovia boy was in the courtroom. The boy's home was broken up through an unfortunate ouster proceeding for nonpayment of rent; and he, Myerberg, proposed to take the boy in his office as a clerk, partly to give him work, but mainly to hold him within reach of the court, in order to have him as a witness in the event this case should ever be brought up again.

It was a very straightforward speech. Mr. Myerberg seemed not so much defending the accused as desirous of having the real truth of the matter aired before the court, let the chips fall where they might.

The Honorable Henry Caridius, of course, was right on the dot this time. He was prepared to go forward with the prosecution, but unfortunately there was nothing to be done.

Myerberg asked Caridius what he was going to do next. Caridius said he was going to Washington; he said he had cleared away the last of his legal left-overs and was now ready to fly to the capital city. He said this in a broad, extensive voice, as if his left-overs had been legion, but that a fighting heart and boundless energy had cleared the deck for his departure.

Myerberg rather teased the newly elected representative about hurrying to Washington.

"Your five fellow members of Congress from Megapolis very seldom go to Washington, why do you go?"

Caridius hardly knew how to take this, but in the crowded courtroom he answered soberly enough that he was going down to establish his office. When the two men were out on the street in the privacy of the traffic Caridius asked seriously if it were true that congressmen from Megapolis did not go to the American capitol.

"They run down when there is an appropriation or any legislation before the house affecting the city's interests, but as representatives of Megapolis they can't be expected to show much concern about the outlying districts."

"Outlying districts?"

"Yes, I mean the rest of the United States of America."

Caridius could not tell whether Myerberg meant this for a jest or not. If a newcomer to Megapolis had said it, he would have meant it for stinging sarcasm, but since Myerberg was born in Megapolis he probably considered it a self-evident truth.

Caridius bade his friend and legal partner good-bye and taxied out to the airport.

Less than two hours later Caridius was in Washington and was motoring from the airport to the Capitol building. On this, his first entrance into the city to assume his formal duties in Congress, an unwonted gravity came over the new

representative. This mood was deepened by the statues of America's great along the boulevard which he followed. Garfield, Grant, Hayes, Harrison; they questioned the new-comer from their bronze impeccability. Their images, lifted up in the sunshine, created out of the past a high, austere patriotic era which their histories did not record. But the idealism of the sculptor brushed aside the carping voice of the historian. America's majesty moved in solemn review before Caridius, and inwardly he consecrated himself to the great national purpose of his people.

The chauffeur called through the glass to know if his fare wanted to visit the Capitol grounds.

The new congressman came to his surroundings and smiled at the quirk which had caused the taxi driver to mistake him for a tourist.

"Yes, take me to the House office," he directed.

The fellow nodded and swung to the right along a curving drive that penetrated the Capitol grounds. Presently he turned and asked Caridius which House office, the old or the new.

"The one in which the Honorable Andrew Blanke had his office," called Caridius.

The man puckered his brows.

"Yonder they both are, close together," he said. "You can have your choice."

As the machine approached Caridius saw a young man and a young girl standing at the door of the old House office looking dubiously at a huge spotted dog which the girl held by a leash. When Caridius was out of the car and mounting the steps, the girl said:

"Here is Mr. Caridius now, you can ask him."

"I don't see what Mr. Caridius has to do with it," replied the young man very politely.

"Why, it will be in his office."

"What is the question?" inquired Caridius, hearing his name called.

"Your secretary wants to bring her dog into the House

office," explained the young man diplomatically, "and unfortunately it's against the rule of the building."

Since the girl was to be his private secretary, Caridius knew that she must be the Miss Littenham mentioned to him by Krauseman. But now he recognized the girl with the spotted dog as the reporter who had interviewed him for the *Tribune*. The heiress and the journalist suddenly coalesced and became one girl in his thoughts. For some reason this gave him quite a stir of surprise.

"I don't see why anyone should object if Mr. Caridius wanted to keep Rajah in his office," persisted the girl with a sort of calm certainty in her manner.

It was not the kind of manner that the door guard of the old House office building could very well set aside.

"Let me telephone the superintendent," suggested the young man in a voice that assured Miss Littenham that the superintendent would strongly endorse the entry of her dog.

"Certainly."

The guard stepped to his desk just inside the door and began a conference with the superintendent. They talked for some little time. Presently the young man began describing the dog, and one phrase he used was, "He looks like he's worth about seven or eight hundred dollars."

Miss Littenham corrected in a faintly impatient voice:

"If that has anything to do with it, his price as a puppy was twenty-eight hundred dollars and nobody knows what he's worth now."

The guard repeated this into the telephone:

"He was worth twenty-eight hundred dollars when he was a puppy and nobody knows what he is worth now."

He stood listening for another half minute and called the name Littenham once or twice in the receiver. Finally he turned.

"The superintendent says it will be all right for a while."

When the matter of the dog was threshed out, Caridius began making inquiries about the offices which were to be allotted to him.

"I thought it might be convenient for me to occupy Andrew Blanke's old offices."

"Mr. Blanke's dead," said the guard.

"Yes, I know that. I've been elected in his place. I thought it might be convenient for me to . . ."

"Oh, I see what you mean." He turned to a list on his desk and ran his finger down it. He stopped at a place.

"No, number 83, that was Mr. Blanke's old office, has been given to number 165."

"Why?" asked Miss Littenham.

"He has been here for two or three years, and he's coming down from the second floor."

"Who has?"

"Number 165."

"I mean who is number 165?" pressed the girl.

"Oh, he is . . ." The guard resorted to his list again.

In the midst of this meandering colloquy a heavy round-faced man wearing a wide fur-finished felt hat came into the door and exclaimed in an enveloping baritone that was almost devoid of consonantal clicks:

"Well, how's my friend Caridius by this time . . . are you coming in?"

Caridius accepted the big cordial hand.

"Yes, I'm trying to get the suite of rooms Mr. Blanke had, but apparently another man has applied. . . ."

"Mr. Johnson," announced the guard from his list.

"MM-mm," nodded the big man, "Tyrus Johnson, perhaps, or Philander Johnson, or Easton Johnson."

"The man who has been in 165," interpolated the guard.

"That's Easton Johnson," supplied the broad-hatted man, as if this settled the matter to the satisfaction of all.

So great was his power of suggestion that Caridius began saying:

"Well, perhaps I might move into 165."

But the guard turned to his index and reported hurriedly that 341 was moving into 165.

"What floor is 341 on?" asked Caridius in faint dismay.

"Look here," interrupted Miss Littenham, speaking to the fat man, "which is the best suite of rooms to have?"

The fat man removed his wide hat with elaborate grace.

"Madame, that depends entirely upon what you want."

"Mr. Bing, may I introduce you to my stenographer, Miss Littenham?" interpolated Caridius.

"Littenham!" ejaculated Mr. Bing. "Miss Littenham," here he was suave again, "it's a very great pleasure to meet beauty amid the wilderness of politics. As I say, it depends on what you want, Miss Littenham. If your goal is reëlection, by all means take a ground-floor suite here in the old office building. If your goal is hard work, take a suite on the top floor of the new office building."

"Just why is that?" inquired the girl, smiling.

"Because downstairs your constituents can get at you easily. You'll meet everybody from home who comes to Washington, and you'll get their votes. If you are upstairs, it's too much trouble to look you up, so you lose their votes."

"I think Mr. Caridius would like the downstairs suite," suggested Miss Littenham inquiringly.

"I believe it would be pleasanter down here," agreed Caridius.

"Much pleasanter," nodded Mr. Bing, "especially in the month of November: that's our hottest and most trying month here in Washington."

The girl turned to the guard.

"Look here, who has the allotting of these suites?"

"The House superintendent," explained the young man promptly.

"And who is the House superintendent under?"

"The Architect's office."

She turned to Mr. Bing.

"Is the Architect's office a patronage job?"

The fat man nodded and smiled.

"It's a job in Washington."

The young lady turned to the guard.

"Get me Senator Loree on the telephone."

She went to the desk and leaned over for the telephone. The great Dane coiled himself in the entrance and watched her out of remote eyes.

Mr. Bing continued to Caridius more seriously:

"You ought to get down on the first floor if you can. Be accessible, it helps a little. And it is your duty to get yourself reelected if you possibly can. It requires about three or four terms to educate a congressman and give him the run of the place. And it's a very expensive school. If you allow yourself to get beaten just when you have learned enough to be of some value you have really short-changed the American people. Remember that on Election Day."

Caridius stood nodding and smiling.

"I will engrave that on the tablets of my memory."

The new congressman became serious and continued:

"Any congressman's value comes through his committee work. Now, just how do I get on a committee?"

"Why, you go to the member of your state delegation who is on the Committee on Committees. Tell him what you want . . . what do you want?"

Caridius hesitated. He recalled what he had felt as he rode up the statue-spaced boulevard from the airport.

"Well, I should like to specialize in some line of work for—for the most . . . you know . . . general good of my country."

The fat man blinked at him.

"General good of the country?"

"That was my idea."

"Listen. Get that figment of the imagination out of your head. There is no such thing as the general good of the country. The different sections of our country send members here to get what they can for those sections. You come from the North; I come from the South; Johnson, the man who has moved into 83, comes from the West. We are all natural enemies. You and I have been at war. We were fighting each other not so many years ago. But all three of us

are sent here now, not to fight, but to trade with each other. That's what Congress is for: it's a trading post where you swap off what your section doesn't want for something it does want. But lay off of any fool idea that you are legislating for the country at large, there ain't no sich animal."

"I had thought about an appointment on the Committee on Military Affairs," suggested Caridius, remembering Jim Essary's invention. "That has national implications."

"Yes, certainly, it has national implications for those sections of the country where airplanes are built and munitions manufactured. If you had told me that was how you wanted to influence the nation as a whole, I could have saved myself my speech."

Here the guard and Miss Littenham interrupted the conversation of the statesmen to say that the Architect's office had reordered the assignment of suite 83, that Johnson was to go back upstairs to 165, where he came from, and Caridius would occupy the old quarters of Andrew Blanke.

21

IN THE RESTAURANT in the Capitol building, which is denied to the public at large and reserved for congressmen, the Honorable Henry Lee Caridius complained to his friend, the Honorable Josiah Bing, about the sightseer publicity of his offices on the first floor of the House office building.

"Every American who has cooked up a bill to save his country comes to my office first because I'm on the first floor; now if I were on the second or third, his initiative would probably be spent below and I would never see him."

The heavy man broke off and dunked a piece of corn dodger in a cup of pot likker, both of which delicacies the chef had concocted especially for him. He pointed the greened and wetted end of his bread at his fellow diner.

"Caridius, I'll have to admit, on second thought, I gave you Southern advice about your location. Yankee congressmen really don't need ground-floor offices."

"Why not?" asked Caridius, who liked the robustious Mr. Bing better every time he was with him.

"Because you Yankee members have your political bosses who can guarantee an electing vote for certain definite favors. You pay your penny and your uneasiness is over with. In the South we lack system. We have only a few political machines, and they work creakily and uneasily. Our big deciding vote swings with damnable uncertainty on the whim of the voter. You can buy votes in the South, all you want; but you can't get 'em delivered. You have to really deserve them to get them. That's why I have my offices on the first floor. I am down where my constituents can see me plainly, a deserving man, hard at work. And what's the result? I have to work so hard at being seen plainly and being deserving that I have no time to look into the various bills that come before Congress and on which I have to vote. I am so busy holding my job that I can't work at it. That is the reason today why the North leads the South in our national legislation; the Northern vote is delivered in bundles and the Northern congressman can spend his time getting appropriations; the Southern votes come singly, and the Southern congressman spends his time getting elected."

Here Congressman Bing finished off his pot likker, drew out a fat gold watch, made a hasty swipe at his mouth with his napkin.

"Got to see a Mrs. Sassinet in my office . . . on the first floor . . . this very minute!"

The name Sassinet struck a vaguely familiar note in Caridius' head. Then he remembered:

"I have an engagement with the same woman, I'll venture. Yesterday Miss Littenham read me a telegram from a Mrs. Sassinet asking for an appointment at two."

"Mine's at one," said Bing. He thought a moment, looked about over the lunch room and signaled a waiter.

"Ask Mr. Davis to step to our table, will you, George?"

The black man, whose name was not George, hurried away with a negro's droll ability to combine dignity with swiftness of motion.

When the Honorable Mr. Davis came over in response to Mr. Bing's signal, the fat man said:

"Davis, yesterday you received a telegram from a Mrs. Sassinet asking you for an appointment for three in the afternoon?" Mr. Davis smiled and stroked an old-fashioned sandy handlebar mustache, one of three still left in Congress. In fact, to it Mr. Davis attributed his long political success. It made him stand out above all the other congressional aspirants in his district.

"What is this, a Sherlock Holmes demonstration, or do you read my mail?"

"It is a deduction," admitted Mr. Bing. "This Mrs. Sassinet will see me at one, Caridius at two, you at three——"

"I'm at four," interposed Mr. Davis.

"Why, certainly, three would be Oscar Davis, whose state appears in the alphabet before yours. Isn't that generous and patriotic of her to spend a whole day telling the congressmen what laws to pass? Oh, woman, woman, counselor and friend; anodyne of the myriad ills of life; remembrancer of a vanished Eden and harbinger of a paradise to come. . . ." He looked at his watch again and moved solemnly out of the restaurant to keep his appointment with Mrs. Sassinet.

The Honorable Henry Lee Caridius finished his lunch and accompanied Congressman Davis to the elevator that lifted them to the floor of the House. They pushed their way through sightseers who crowded around women guides.

A little later they entered the endless clatter of the dark semicircular auditorium of the House.

Stenographers, the timekeeper, the Speaker of the House were stacked up in ascending steps against the American flag that hung under the press gallery. Perhaps a hundred members were walking about talking, bowing and waving to each other. In the din a man to whom nobody listened was shouting something from a small speaker's stand that stood on the common level of the floor. Within an arm's length of this speaker stood a congressional reporter listening with strained attention and taking, as best he could in the uproar, a stenographic report of the speech to be printed in the Congressional Record.

"Mr. Chairman!" shouted the speaker, lifting an appealing arm, "I hope I do not have to lift my voice to make myself heard!"

The chairman on top of the apex piled up under the press gallery pounded a heavy gavel on an iron plate with a loud harsh clank.

"Gentlemen, let us have order!"

Came a momentary lull in the uproar, during which the members glanced at their high-placed chairman. Someone halfway back among the seats shouted out:

"Mr. Chairman, I arise to ask if there is a quorum present?"

The chairman clanked again.

"The gentleman arises to the point of a quorum!" he shouted.

The speaker in possession of the floor stopped his hallooing and stood wiping the sweat from his face while the quorum was ascertained. He could not go on speaking unless there were a certain number of members not listening on the floor. A half-dozen pages scurried through the door of the cloakroom and in about three or four minutes whole companies of congressmen, all looking slightly disheveled and unpressed, eddied out onto the floor of the House, circled

about aimlessly for a moment and then regurgitated into the cloakroom.

The quorum having been established momentarily, the speaker drank water and proceeded, shouting:

"And may I ask the proponents of this measure wherein it differs from House Bill Number 67819546 which it repeats jot for jot, tittle for tittle, the ineffectualities, the inefficiencies, the inanities, the imperfections and shortcomings of House Bill Number 67819546 which was introduced two years ago, right on this spot where I am now standing, by that far-sighted solon, that incorruptible patriot, that unyielding bulwark of American liberties, our late lamented colleague, Andrew J. Blanke?"

At the upward curve of the speaker's voice on his period, applause broke forth from the nearer members and communicated itself mechanically to all the circling benches. The speaker mopped his face until the applause subsided, then flung out an arm and demanded:

"Why should we now repeat Andrew J. Blanke's absurdities? His bill did not keep down war profiteering! Why does anyone imagine this pale washed-out replica of that original legislative ineptitude will turn the trick?" He shook a fist on high and spaced his words: "I . . . demand . . . a bill . . . with . . . teeth . . . in it! A hundred million tax-burdened Americans demand that these fat, loathsome leeches on the body politic be choked from their necrophagous battenning on the flesh of American heroes!"

His upturn brought more applause from members strolling and talking among the seats.

The floor leader turned from a private conversation and shouted:

"Why don't you write a bill to suit yourself? You haven't written any bill to stop war profiteering!"

The speaker on the floor flung back orotundly:

"Does the gentleman imagine that my right of criticism is in any way abridged, curtailed, foreshortened, or abbrevi-

ated by the fact that I happen not to be the daddy of his own bill?"

Congressman Davis turned to Caridius.

"That's Orton. He's the bitterest opponent to the Anti-Profiteering bill."

"He says it's not strong enough to suit him," observed Caridius.

"He always says that. You can't write an anti-war-profiteering bill strong enough to get Orton to vote for it."

Several more speakers were allowed three or four minutes each to speak on the bill. Most of them tried to work up to an oratorical or a vituperative climax. In the midst of this the clerk would bang his gavel. They would utter a few more rumbling words, pick up their papers from the desk and join in the general conversation that filled the chamber.

Caridius excused himself from Mr. Davis and set forth to find Mr. Winton, who was the member of the Committee on Committees for his state delegation.

He moved about the floor of the House looking for Winton. He soon became accustomed to the parliamentary procedure of pausing momentarily in his walk every time the chairman rapped for order and resuming it an instant later with hardly any appreciable loss of time. Caridius eventually found Mr. Winton in the cloakroom, who suggested that they remain where they were so they would not be forced to shout so loudly to make themselves understood.

"I wanted to see you, Mr. Winton, about my committee appointments."

Mr. Winton made a slight bow of assent.

"In what committees are you interested, Mr. Caridius?"

"The Committee on Military Affairs."

Mr. Winton became quite attentive.

"You have specialized in military matters? I am not asking you for my own information," he explained quickly, "but I want to present your qualifications before the rest of the committee."

"Well . . . I have always taken an interest in military

affairs," said Caridius, remembering some parades he had seen.

"You have had military service, of course?"

"Well . . . no, I haven't *had* military service," stressed Caridius as if he had mixed with military service in every other possible way except having some of it.

Came a brief pause, then Mr. Winton said in a slightly flatted tone:

"Well, I'll present your name to the Committee with all possible recommendations of my own."

Caridius suddenly foresaw that he was not going to be assigned to the military committee. As a last resort he admitted the actual truth to Mr. Winton:

"I have friends who are interested in military matters, Mr. Winton. I can serve my constituents, and therefore my country, best by being placed in direct contact with such affairs."

Mr. Winton nodded and patted the new congressman's arm.

"I'll do everything in my power to place you in the line of work most congenial to your talents. If my efforts should prove fruitless, you know you have the privilege of appearing and speaking before the Committee at any time."

Caridius really was discouraged, but he said with what lightness he could muster:

"Get me on if you can, you know speaking is not voting."

"My very best efforts," nodded Mr. Winton earnestly.

Caridius left the House and started back through the Capitol grounds to the House office. He was seriously discouraged. He wondered to what committee he would be appointed. There were honorable, there were neutral, then there were dishonorable appointments.

Below Caridius, almost covering a long flight of stone steps, the entire student body of some high school were looking at the seated statue of John Marshall. The babel of their voices died away as the congressman walked on through the grounds to the House office.

When he entered his own suite, he saw Miss Littenham talking to a fat, tightly constricted middle-aged woman in a sable coat.

"There is Mr. Caridius now," said the girl, indicating her employer. "Mrs. Sassinet, may I present Mr. Caridius?"

Caridius had forgot Mrs. Sassinet, and now for her to appear on schedule time just after his unsuccessful interview with Mr. Winton. . . . But he put his feelings behind him.

"Ah, Mr. Caridius, it is so gratifying to meet you," began Mrs. Sassinet with the windy cooing enthusiasm that somehow goes with furs, poundage and women's clubs. "I have just come from Mr. Bing's office, and he was so favorably impressed with my idea. . . ."

"He would be, he's Southern."

"Ah, but how about you?"

"I will be, I'm Northern."

"Oh . . ." the lady gave him a prearranged smile . . . "you are very gallahnt. I am sure you will be. My idea is right in line with the times . . . you know with the general economic policy of the administration . . . nothing productive . . . it will spend a great deal of money in a noble cause, distribute wages widely, and will produce absolutely nothing that anyone can use." Mrs. Sassinet brimmed with enthusiasm and patted her plump gloved hands together to stress these highly desirable points.

"And what is your plan?" inquired Caridius affably.

"Here is the bill my chapter has drawn up," effervesced Mrs. Sassinet, picking up and spreading out a crackling roll of sheepskin on which was inscribed a document in copperplate handwriting like an old-fashioned diploma.

"It's a bill," interposed Miss Littenham, "to carve the Rocky Mountains into statues."

Mrs. Sassinet ignored the girl but did glance at the harlequin great Dane.

"It is a bill, Mr. Caridius," she went on in her elaborate coo, "to create out of the great mountain peaks in our

Western states a group of timeless memorials to those heroic leaders of the American Revolution who gave their lives for a new, an untried, but a majestic conception of individual liberty, individual rights and individual happiness. Don't you see, Mr. Caridius, in carving these cloud-touching memorials to what our revolutionary forefathers dreamed of building, we are, at the same time, rearing a monument to what we, today, have built."

Caridius, who stood looking at the sheepskin with its Spencerian handwriting, saw that Mrs. Sassinet was quoting a part of her bill verbatim and no doubt knew all the rest of it by heart. The congressman had the stricken feeling of one who is confronted with such an abysmal vagary that there is no way to discuss it.

"Why . . . I believe some of the women's organizations in the South are . . . are carving up the mountains in that section of the country," ventured Caridius.

"Yes indeed," bubbled Mrs. Sassinet, "and now, while the nation is trying to spend money and produce nothing vulgar and commercial, don't you think this is the very moment in our national history to carve up the Rocky Mountains, if we ever intend to carve them?"

"Why yes . . . yes . . . that's true," agreed the congressman.

"It's entirely nonproductive."

"That's correct."

"It will be far more expensive than plowing under wheat, and when it's finished the people will at least have something beautiful to look at."

"Well, they had something beautiful to look at when you Western people plowed under your wheat," suggested Caridius.

"What was that?"

"The market quotations."

Mrs. Sassinet smiled.

"That is true, but those quotations won't last as long as the mountains. And the fields themselves didn't look so

pretty. My husband plowed under twelve thousand acres."

"Twelve thousand!" ejaculated Caridius, really impressed. "Your husband produced nothing at all on twelve thousand acres?"

"Yes, it was disked up so late in the season nothing would grow, not even grass. And as I looked at the raw earth day after day I thought, why couldn't that labor have been put on something beautiful. We live in sight of the mountains, so I thought of carving them."

This information somehow made Mrs. Sassinet's plan seem far more nearly rational than it had at first hearing. He could imagine that a woman looking day after day at twelve thousand bare stricken acres might fall into fantasy.

"I suggested to Mrs. Sassinet," interposed Miss Littenham, "that her bill properly should go before the Committee on Monuments. I have looked up the chairman of that committee."

Caridius gave Miss Littenham a grateful glance.

"Certainly, that's where the bill properly would go, Mrs. Sassinet."

"But we can count on you for your support on the floor of the House," cooed the lady.

"Completely, completely," assured Caridius earnestly. "You say you have the chairman on the Committee on Monuments, Miss Littenham. . . . Mrs. Sassinet, let me present Miss Littenham, she is the daughter of Merritt Littenham."

The be-sabed woman turned, and her pursed lips fell a little apart.

"Not the Merritt Littenham. . . ."

"Yes, Miss Littenham is interested in politics and——"

"Well, really . . . young girls are so ambitious nowadays. . . . I am most charmed to meet Miss Littenham."

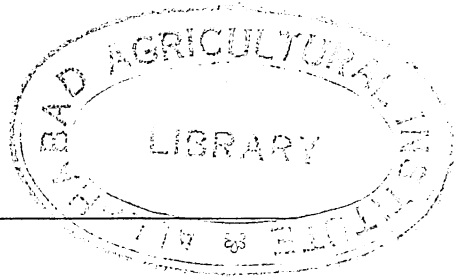
"I will direct you to the chairman of the Committee on Monuments," offered the girl.

"You will be doing me a vast favor. . . . Oh, is that dog coming out with us?"

"It's my dog."

"Well, I've been looking at that dog. I was just wondering . . ." The door closed on the departing ladies.

22



AS MISS LITTENHAM led the visitor out of the office door, the Honorable Henry Lee Caridius received his first sharp impression that his private secretary was a very beautiful girl. The moment was a triumph for the ancient and unquestionable aphorism, "Pretty is as pretty does." The removal of Mrs. Sassinet from his office gave the congressman the feeling of a man awaking to reality after a slightly grotesque dream. She had seemed a little incredible at first, but when Caridius thought about her more calmly, now that she was out of his office, she simmered down to an example of the wealthy American clubwoman's genius for amplified echo. She was echoing in her constructive feminine way the action of her husband in destroying twelve thousand fat acres. Nobody but men confounded by the masculine superstition of logic would ever have lopped off twelve thousand acres of potential eatables to make them fit the flickering unreality of that imaginary measuring rod, money. And only a destruction shocked woman would have ricocheted into such a grandiose conception as carving the Rockies.

As Caridius sat musing over these sexual forms of dementia his door opened again, but instead of Miss Littenham returning, as he had expected, he saw Jim Essary and Rose Saylor. He jumped up out of his chair and offered a hand to each of his callers.

"I swear I'm glad to see somebody solid again. Sit down."

"Solid?"

"Normal, balanced, right end up. . . . I have just had one of the damndest callers . . . but then I suppose it would be uncongressional to describe my callers. . . . Tell me something about the people at home."

"Miss Stott and Myerberg are married."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, we saw her there in the office with him before we started down here this morning. She is working with him," said Essary.

"Such a Jewish thing to do," observed Rose Saylor: "take her in his office where she will be busy and happy instead of cooping her up in an apartment like a gentleman and letting her brood over how much pleasanter life would have been if she had married somebody else."

Caridius felt a reminiscent qualm at having missed Connie Stott.

"And the Estovia boy is in Myerberg's office too: he's office boy."

A question flickered through Caridius' head whether all these shifts were bona fide, or was Myerberg withdrawing from circulation possible witnesses in the Canarelli case? . . . Here he said aloud:

"Sol seems to be accumulating help these days."

"It's his impulse to see in every person a possible source of profit," analyzed Essary. "All persons who have the temperament to become wealthy look at the world like that."

"Well . . . there's nothing to be said against that," opined Caridius.

"It's the attitude that dehumanizes society," returned the inventor with a tang of acerbity. "If men were regarded as men and not as instruments there wouldn't be any such things as wars of aggression, sweatshops, defensive labor unions . . . and there wouldn't be a group of scientists in the Rump-Mu laboratories being used."

Essary's high moral attack on the munitions plant amused

Caridius because he knew the inventor was rationalizing his own effort to break his contract and conceal his own invention from the Rumbourg-Nordensk Company. Attached to this thought came a sudden possibility of danger. He straightened up.

"By the way, I've got to tell you something."

"What?"

"My private secretary is Miss Littenham, she's the daughter of Merritt Littenham, who owns the munitions plant."

Essary was disconcerted, especially after his moral tirade.

"Well . . . that's awkward."

"She isn't here as a spy, is she?" asked Miss Saylor.

"Oh no, no, really she is a very sweet and lovely girl."

"But, the devil," objected Essary, "I can't write or telegraph or telephone you anything about . . . our business . . . it'll go through her hands."

"Aren't you incorporated . . . won't it all go under the corporate name of Saylor and Rose?"

"Well . . . yes . . . but that's pretty thin. . . . I swear I hate for that girl to be in your office. It shows up the whole idea in—in such a false light. What I'm trying to do is to preserve my invention for the military use of my country. My interest is not financial, it's patriotic. But how would I ever get your secretary to see a thing like that?"

"Now, listen," interrupted Rose Saylor, "she wouldn't see it. No woman could possibly see that. She mustn't have a chance to see it. You have your blueprints, Jim, give them to Mr. Caridius. . . . Where is the girl now?"

"Why, she has just stepped out a moment, but of course I could have given her work in another room."

"No, I think it's a part of . . . of . . . Destiny that she was out of the office just at this moment," said Rose Saylor.

"Part of what?" ejaculated Caridius.

"Destiny," repeated Rose with a certain doggedness.

"For the love of Mike!"

"Oh, that's her defense reaction to the fact that I work in explosives all the time," brushed aside Essary. "She's

modern. She naturally has no religion, so she has to cook up Destiny to save me from being blown up."

"I swear it must be a terrible thing for two psychoanalysts to live together," ejaculated Caridius, beginning to laugh.

"All that is very funny, of course," agreed Essary, "but your secretary is likely to be back at any moment. Here are the blueprints for my invention. As a patriotic American citizen, I want them to go to the War Department. Now what are you going to do with them?"

"Why, I'm going to take them over to the War Department. . . ."

At this moment the door opened. A large and quite beautiful girl entered.

"Oh, Miss Littenham," explained Caridius, "I am just going out with some friends. I'll be back in about two hours."

The trio walked out to the front of the old House office building with a somewhat unjustified feeling of having had a close call.

"Where are we going?" inquired Miss Saylor.

"I thought we would go directly to the War Department. If they approve the idea they will recommend it to the Committee on Military Affairs."

"Are you a member of that committee?" inquired Essary hopefully.

"Well, no-o . . . not at present."

Essary signaled a cab, and the three got in. Caridius continued:

"I had thought about getting myself put on the Committee but that would place me in a judicial position over your invention, whereas, if I am not on the Committee, I can appear before them and openly advocate the acceptance of your idea." This misstatement sounded so honest and above-board that Caridius could not resist capping it off with, "So I have really steered clear of an actual assignment on

the Committee to keep myself free for the service of my friends."

"Caridius," said the inventor in a moved tone, "I wouldn't want you to sacrifice a good committee appointment just on my account."

"Don't you worry, I'll land another berth. . . . Chauffeur, take us to the War Department, Seventeenth Street and Constitution Avenue."

As the taxicab moved and halted, moved and halted under the time-wasting stop lights, Essary began:

"Perhaps I ought to explain to you just what I have invented so you can stress its good points before the War Department."

"All right . . . what is it?"

"It isn't a powder; it's a method of manufacturing the granules of any powder into more efficient shapes, or forms."

"Yes, I caught that idea the other day at your laboratory."

"Oh, you did. . . ." A pause, then: "Do you suppose my process will be kept completely a secret if entrusted to the War Department?"

"Oh, absolutely."

"The reason I don't record it openly in the Patent Office is because other nations would have access to the idea."

Caridius drew down his lips.

"That and the fact that the Rumbourg-Nordensk people could easily find out who was back of the patent."

"No, really," protested Essary. "I could easily have sold the process outright to the Japanese gentleman you saw in Myerberg's office . . . he offered me a good price."

Miss Saylor nodded.

"Yes, an excellent price." She sounded as if she did not approve of its rejection.

"Well, after all," moralized Caridius, "the work of American inventors ought to be placed, first of all, at the service of America. Your country bred you, schooled you . . ."

He tried to think of some more profound reason but none came to his mind.

"I tell Jim," said Miss Saylor, still disapproving, "that patriotism is nothing more than a silly mixture of collective conceit, homesickness and conventional jingoism propagated by the newspapers and the pulpit for the benefit of the very rich."

Caridius was somewhat shocked at the generation just younger than his own.

"Why for the benefit of the very rich?"

Miss Saylor shrugged and pointed out of the cab window. They had drawn up at the curb in front of the War Department.

The building was a long cream-colored structure whose flat façade was spaced with a succession of large windows. The three companions dismissed their taxi and entered one of a group of tall doors which formed the main entrance of the building. Caridius asked a policeman just inside the entrance for the chief of the ordnance department and was directed to the third story. They climbed two naked flights of stairs and then walked past a long succession of doors marked "Fuse and Grenades," "Bombs," "Pyrotechnics," "Small Arms," and so on, until they reached "Chief of Ordnance."

The three consulted a moment and decided that Caridius would better go in first and acquaint the Chief with the purpose of the visit and later introduce Essary.

The Chief of Ordnance turned out to be very easily approached. His door was open. A girl typist clattering near the entrance simply looked at Caridius and nodded toward a man at a desk using a telephone.

When the telephone conversation was finished the Chief motioned toward a chair.

The congressman introduced himself and explained that a constituent of his had just invented a remarkable, a very extraordinary explosive.

The Chief nodded faintly.

"And . . . uh . . . my constituent doesn't want his invention to go through the Patent Office," went on Caridius, "because——"

"Because other nations would be able to learn how it was manufactured," supplied the Chief.

"Why yes," said Caridius, a little surprised. "Do you have cases like this very often?"

"Now and then," admitted the Chief. "During the World War we had an average of three men a day who came to us in great secrecy and offered to divulge to the department, for a million dollars, the fact that a mixture of sugar and chlorate of potassium would explode. They didn't want it to go through the Patent Office because the enemy would find it out. Their motives were always of the highest."

Caridius was amused.

"Have they quit coming now?"

"They have dwindled to two or three a month."

Caridius thought of saying, "This man isn't a novice, he's a professional research man," but he decided that might be unwise. Then he suddenly remembered:

"My man hasn't invented an explosive at all; he has invented a shape for explosives."

The Chief took an interest in the conversation for the first time. He straightened just a little bit.

"A what?"

"I can't explain it to you. The inventor himself is waiting outside: he can tell you what it is better than I can."

"Bring him in," invited the Chief.

When Essary came in and was introduced as Mr. Rose he began his long technical rigmarole explaining his powder. He produced two vials, the first an ordinary powder, the second the same powder regranulated according to Essary's process.

"Now what is the difference between them?" inquired the Chief.

"Look at them under the microscope."

The Chief looked.

"MM-mm . . . the process you do this with, is it intricate?"

"Plants can be built in five-ton-a-day sections at about forty-five thousand dollars a section. I have the blueprints here for a type section."

The Chief nodded slowly with the reserved assent of military men.

"Our technical staff will test the two powders. We will also give you a sample of our powder for you to treat by the same method. Then we will know what recommendation the Ordnance Department can make to the Secretary of War."

Essary expressed his gratitude.

"And what address shall I place on the bottles, Mr. Rose?"

"Saylor and Rose, Room 1515, Lecksher Building, Megapolis."

After the Chief of Ordnance had written the address on the tags, his callers took their leave.

23

ONCE OUT of the War Department into Constitution Avenue the three companions separated. All of them would return to Megapolis that evening: Caridius meant to fly, while Essary and Rose Saylor journeyed more sedately and less expensively by rail. The congressman hailed a cab and directed the driver to the air field.

When he arrived there a low-wing monoplane squatted on its haunches, with gently whirling propellers, ready to launch itself into the air. Caridius jumped out of his cab,

signaled the gateman to hold the plane a moment, and hurried into the office for a ticket. When he came out he saw the guards heaving the rear section of a huge spotted dog into the baggage compartment. The beast turned a bored and perfectly shampooed head to see what the underlings were doing to him.

The sight of the great Dane told Caridius that Miss Littenham was aboard the plane, and a mechanical question went through his mind as to whether or not she had stayed out her full working hours in his office at the Capitol. He glanced at his watch to mark the difference in time between the hour when she should have quit work and the hour when she did quit work. If she thought, merely because she was a wealthy girl, that she could play fast and loose with office hours . . .

As he went up the ship's ladder and entered the duralumin door he tried to think of some courteous but plain way of telling Miss Littenham that he would expect her to keep office hours. He saw her about halfway up the aisle looking out one of the portholes at the ground men and passengers still outside. He paused beside her seat and by way of an entering wedge asked:

"Do you commute to your home every day?"

She glanced up, moved over slightly in her own seat to indicate that he was to have the chair next to hers.

"Yes, it's rather nice to fly home after work. . . . Have you been back to the office since you went out with your friends?"

"No, I haven't. . . . Now, when you leave the office——"

"Then you haven't signed those letters I typed," interrupted the girl in a concerned voice.

"No, naturally . . . I haven't been back."

"But some of them were important," stressed the girl, looking at him with a slight worried frown. "Two of them should certainly have gone out today."

"Well . . ." countered Caridius . . . "tomorrow . . ."

Miss Littenham glanced at her wrist watch.

"Look here, it wouldn't take you fifteen minutes to get back to the office . . . another plane leaves in an hour."

She probably would have moved him out of his seat and out of the plane under the moral pressure of his letters, but at that moment the skipper closed the cabin door, the popping engines broke into a howl, and the ship taxied forward.

To divert her thoughts from his shortcomings Caridius asked lightly:

"Isn't it pretty expensive commuting to Washington on a secretary's salary?"

"I about break even. I have to pay out of my own pocket for half my dog."

"Half your dog?"

"Yes, my baggage allowance covers one half of Rajah and I express the other."

"I hope someday the baggage men won't get the express separated from the ordinary baggage."

The girl glanced again at her seat mate without smiling, as if appraising his little sally for what it was worth. The shriek of the motors went up a tone, and the shaking of the ground gave place to the softer vibrations of the air.

The two passengers watched the field and then the city sink beneath them until the plane had established its height. Caridius forgot his little joke which the girl had dampened and began thinking of what he had told Essary about not wanting a place on the House Committee on Military Affairs. It struck him again as the politic thing to have said. Here he gave attention to the girl again, and the incident vanished from his thoughts.

Miss Littenham was a rather large girl, almost as tall as he, and Caridius began thinking absently that the offspring of the wealthy for some reason ran to size. They were always larger than their parents . . . rich diet when they were young, perhaps . . . better care . . . better training from a physical standpoint . . . the moral end, so he had understood, was something else.

Just then Caridius observed that she was smiling. He remembered his little joke and suddenly had hope for it.

"What has amused you?" he inquired amiably.

The girl turned and looked at him.

"Mrs. Sassinet who came in the office today."

"She was funny," agreed Caridius a little disappointed.

"She asked me if I belonged to her society. I said no. Then she said if I wanted to join she knew a genealogist who could trace my ancestry back to the Revolution. I told her I already knew it. She looked quite surprised and said, 'Why don't you join? That will save you five hundred dollars at least.'"

Caridius began laughing.

"That's as funny as her bill."

"Have you any idea why she wanted her bill passed?"

"Nothing beyond carving megalithic statues."

"No, that wasn't what she was after. She wants to start legislation stupendous enough to attract attention and get herself elected to the presidency of her organization."

Caridius smiled and nodded. This was not sufficiently unusual to provoke comment. Miss Littenham herself was not one of those women to whom one has to talk all the time. Her own lapses in conversation bestowed the same privilege on her companion, and that is something as comforting to the ordinary man as a cushion at a football game.

Their plane had lifted above the spring mist that hung over the country and now flew in the keen upper sunshine. The rays fell through the cabin window on Miss Littenham's sun-tanned face. Her cheek and chin, in the shadow, were an opaque rose, the bridge of her nose a translucent garnet, and her eyes a terre-verte. The curve of her neck into her shoulder and bosom held the same color scheme, but here the direct sunlight from the porthole stopped, and the rest of her body was in ordinary tones.

She produced a cigarette case, offered it.

"I don't believe we're allowed to smoke in the plane," observed Caridius.

"It really is against the rules," agreed Miss Littenham, lighting her own with a little lighter. She glanced about. "Yes, there's one of the signs yonder." She pointed her cigarette at it as she lifted her full breast to the inward flattery of the smoke.

The logical part of Caridius disapproved of this, but that, perhaps, was no very great part, because in the main it seemed all right for the girl to sit and smoke her cigarette if she wanted to. She gave an impression somehow that the sign was inapplicable to her.

The plane was now flying over a floor of interminable mackerel clouds, all just alike, with their edges frayed like feathers. There seemed to be a kind of affinity between this unusual downward view of such high cirrus clouds and the young woman at his side. He thought of the Valkyries and remembered the fire motif; not the aria, just the fact that there was a fire motif. Here he was riding through the sky with one of the Valkyries, only this one seemed absent-minded and uninspired by the genuine Valkyrian enthusiasms, whatever they were.

A voice with a foreign softening of the "l's" called across the aisle to Caridius and asked him if he had seen Mr. Essary.

The congressman looked across the aisle and was not so surprised to see Mr. Kumata as he was surprised that he had not seen him long before. He called back that he had been with Essary just a little while ago.

"Had he begun negotiations before he left you?" inquired the Japanese, suppressing the subject of his inquiry.

"Would you excuse me a moment?" asked Caridius. "This is an acquaintance of mine."

"Certainly."

Caridius crossed over to the unoccupied seat by Kumata.

"He made a beginning."

"I suppose it has hardly been placed before the Committee on Military Affairs so quickly."

"No, I am sure not."

"You are not on that committee?"

"No, I am not," said Caridius, and he considered repeating to Kumata the rigmarole he had told to Essary, but it struck him the Jap wouldn't believe it.

Mr. Kumata nodded thoughtfully in the drone of the plane. The conversation seemed ended, so Caridius excused himself again and went back to the girl.

What the Japanese gentleman thought about a civilization in which a man would feel it incumbent upon him to give up a conversation with another man and go back to a girl was not revealed. He was probably amused.

When he was once more beside Miss Littenham the girl turned to him and said:

"I didn't know you wanted to get on the Committee on Military Affairs."

Caridius was a little surprised that she had heard his conversation, although he had had to lift his tones in the noise of the motors.

"Why do you think I do?" he asked.

"From the way you said you weren't on it."

"Well . . . you know it now," admitted the politician in light disappointment.

"Are you doing anything about it?"

"No-o . . . not now."

"Not pulling any strings?"

"I probably will," said Caridius, wondering what strings he would pull . . . he had none on Krauseman . . . and Krauseman had some on him.

"Why don't you come with me out to Pine Manor?" she suggested.

"That sounds extremely pleasant," said Caridius, thinking it would probably be dull, "but I don't believe I get the connection between Pine Manor and the Committee on Military Affairs."

"Why, to see Father."

"You mean about the Committee?"

"Yes, he might be able to do something . . . ask Mr.

Krauseman to see Mr. Winton . . . he's usually able to do something."

"Oh yes . . . yes . . . that is an idea. I'll think it over."

"All right, I'll let you know when you can catch Father at home."

"That's really very good of you."

She fell silent once more, and he sat glancing now and then at the opalescent outline of her face against the white feathery clouds seen through the port, and he observed that her features were even and symmetrical and there was no reason why she was not beautiful. He thought about her looks. Perhaps she was beautiful . . . perhaps she was beautiful in the way a very wealthy girl would be beautiful . . . beauty was a norm . . . the norm of great wealth would not be the norm of the middle class. The whimsy entered his head that it would be too bad if he were flying through the air with an extravagantly beautiful heiress and didn't know it.

Presently he discovered that Miss Littenham could sit comfortably through longer intervals of silence than he could.

"When did you become interested in politics?" he began as a new departure.

"When Dr. Snell told me that there was due in America the same sort of shift of power that they are having in Europe."

"Who is Dr. Snell?"

Miss Littenham glanced at him, and Caridius knew that he should have known Dr. Snell.

"Professor of politics in Chicago U."

"Oh yes, certainly," said Caridius, as if he were now surprised at his own lapse of memory. "Uh . . . when were you there?" His voice hit the word "there" with a warmth as if he knew all about it.

"Three years ago," answered Miss Littenham in a cold voice that told him that she knew he had never heard of the great Dr. Snell there or anywhere else.

Caridius was a little taken aback that anyone could be so disrespectful with so few and so innocent words. Then he became rather amused and said:

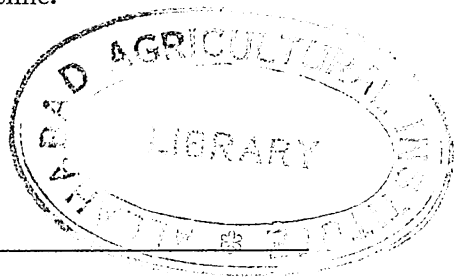
"Well, tell me some of the things Mr. Snell taught."

"*Doctor* Snell was not a theorist or a reformer. He said political corruption was merely a symptom that real power lay in a different group from those holding apparent power. He said power has always belonged to the man who could take it and use it and that wealth is a virgin who is always consistently raped."

Caridius sat for a moment rather shocked at such teaching given a girl. It was obviously true, but he did not consider the subject matter fit for feminine ears, much less the phraseology. After a space he changed the subject again by saying:

"I believe I will go out to see your father in Pine Manor if you could arrange it for me some time."

24



WHEN THE AIRSHIP reached Megapolis the Honorable Henry Lee Caridius called a taxicab and speeded Miss Littenham on her way to Pine Manor. But after the large, symmetrical and probably beautiful girl was gone she was by no means cleared from the politician's mind. On the contrary he thought variously, and in the main, adversely about her. She did not have the right attitude toward political life. She was as cynical about it as a Washington newspaper correspondent. He would better get rid of her as quietly as he could. She was really a sort of skeptical red . . . a red who

saw completely through the present régime, but who had no faith in the red nostrum. What he needed in his office, since he had missed Connie Myerberg, was just a plain ordinary stenographer . . . and here Miss Littenham's image came to him again as seen in the two-mile-high sunlight . . . opal cheeks and neck . . . garnet lips . . . jade eyes. He would make the change before long . . . after he had seen her father at Pine Manor, about his committee assignments.

When he entered his suite in the Albemarle Apartments his wife Ellora met him at the door, put her arms around his neck and kissed him.

Somewhat later he learned that this outbreak of affection was motivated by a frock owned at present by Chabrun and Wyllie but which they were willing to part with for a matter of seventy-four dollars and ninety-eight cents. It was a gray outfit, so Caridius gathered, of a perfectly stunning gray with fur on the coat and a belt that would allow it to hang loose or pull up tight, it had a pleated skirt, and had so much style that if a person wore it to a dinner it would look like an evening gown, whereas if she wore it downtown it would look like a street dress and if she wore it to a tennis match it would look like a sport dress.

As Ellora explained this wonderful bargain she stood in the spring sunlight; her lips were ruby, her face translucent mother of pearl and her hair spun gold. This, however, escaped Caridius' attention.

"Why sure," he agreed amiably, "go ahead and get it," and he thought to himself that that ought to keep her in a good humor for a day or so.

When the matter of the dress was settled Ellora remembered that Myerberg had been telephoning for Caridius to come to the office when he returned from Washington. So now she kissed her husband again, somewhat less caressingly, and saw him off.

The moment Caridius was on his way to town, Miss Littenham developed in his mind like a palimpsest. He felt that he should be thinking of his business, of what Myerberg

would want with him, but he knew it would be office routine. The congressman became shocked again at his private secretary's political cynicism. A woman, he thought, ought to be just cynical enough to be piquant, but not peppered, especially a young woman of such distinct physical charm.

When Caridius entered the suite of Myerberg, Meltofsky and Grannan in the Lecksher Building the sight of Mrs. Connie Myerberg sitting at a desk reading a book under a green-shaded office light sent an odd little feeling through his chest. It came over him for the first time as an actual fact that Connie had married a Jew. There she was, sitting there under the lamp, the wife of a Jew. He scanned her handsome face for some signs of disappointment or even the faint beginning of some sort of moral disintegration, but she looked better than ever, more contented, out from under the strain of living in unmixed company.

"Well, I'm certainly glad it has turned out this well so far," thought Caridius in subtle disappointment.

The girl looked up and cried out, delighted:

"Why, hello, Henry!"

"Hello, Connie, it isn't too late to offer my well wishes?"

"Not as long as I'm alive to receive them."

"May that be a long time. . . . What you doing here?"

"Well, sort of office boy . . . and I'm reading law."

"Reading law?"

"Yes, Sol and I decided that at my age it would be unsafe for me to have a child, so I'm reading law."

"MM-mm . . . yeh . . ." Caridius stood nodding while he connected these two propositions as closely as he could.

"Well, how did that Estovia case turn out?"

Mrs. Myerberg put her finger to her lips, shook her head slightly.

"Shh!" Then she said aloud in a routine way, "Oh, nothing unusual to speak of."

Caridius stepped a little nearer.

"What's wrong?"

"Why, the Estovia boy works here in the office."

"Oh, yes, I'd heard about that. . . . How did the case come out?"

"Why, no witnesses appeared against Canarelli, and the case was dismissed. . . . They very often do that . . . hire the witnesses to go away."

Caridius shook his head slightly as he thought that all women are natural reformers until they get happily married, and then there isn't anything wrong with the world that needs reforming.

"Oh, it's all right, it's the usual thing," consoled Connie, misinterpreting his gesture.

"Yes, I know, but I had hoped to start my public service with a thoroughgoing reform," said Caridius, who had to explain his head shake somehow. "Did Sol want to see me?"

"Yes, I don't believe there is anybody in his office now. You can go right in."

Caridius went in and found the lawyer working at his desk. Myerberg straightened up and lifted a hand.

"Hello, I was just writing you. Essary telephoned me that you and he had taken his gadget around to the War Office. Did they seem impressed?"

"Well, at first the Chief didn't, but he picked up when he found Essary had a process for sale, not a product."

Myerberg shook his head.

"He is still a long way from taw. I swear I don't see why Essary didn't sell his idea when he had a good price offered him. . . . What about the Committee on Military Affairs?"

"You mean my appointment?"

"Yes, you are getting on?"

"Well, I looked up Winton: he didn't appear optimistic. He asked me did I know anything about military affairs."

"Did you tell him you knew an appropriation when you saw one?"

"No, really, he seemed serious."

"I see, well, if he really asked you if you knew anything about military affairs as a prerequisite to your being

assigned to the Committee on Military Affairs, it shows you aren't going to get on."

"That's the way I interpreted it."

"Huh. . . . Now if you could get a place on that committee it would be a big help in getting Essary's invention accepted."

"However, I wouldn't want to use my vote to forward a project I was advocating."

"No, no, certainly not. Now let me see . . ." He ran his square fingers through his closely cropped curly hair. "I know a man who, I believe, would be interested in getting you a place on the Committee on Military Affairs." He turned to his telephone. "Angelo, will you ask Bancroft 27-471 to step over to my office right quick?"

"Who is Angelo?" asked Caridius, wondering about Bancroft 27-471.

"That's Angelo Estovia. . . . I was sorry that prosecution fell through. This city is down on Joe Canarelli rather unreasonably, I think. I didn't want to defend him in this Estovia case, but I just wanted to show up the protective trade union idea back of his organizations. After all, Caridius, the small tradesmen have got to combine somehow against the rich, and if their discipline is sometimes harsh, my God, what about the discipline of the trusts and holding companies?"

"But Joe Canarelli isn't a small tradesman, he's a very wealthy man."

"That's no objection. The object of combination is wealth. You can't condemn anything because it succeeds. The law should be more lenient toward the irregularities of wealth than the irregularities of the poor, because such leniency fosters success."

"Well, it is," said Caridius.

"That is correct, and as far as my observation goes it is the only application of pure logic in the American judiciary." Myerberg sat meditating a moment longer. "Is there

any definite force against your being assigned to the military committee?"

"Not that I know of."

"Not . . . Littenham, for example?"

"Why no-o . . . his daughter . . . you know, the girl Krauseman had me appoint as my secretary?"

"Yes, I know, go ahead."

"Well she suggested this afternoon, as she and I flew from Washington here, that her father might help me get the assignment."

"Well, that's good, that's very helpful."

There came a whir of the telephone. Myerberg picked up the receiver and said:

"All right, have him come in."

A little later the door opened and the small trim form of Canarelli entered. He ran a hand over his black marcelled hair and glanced about for a mirror but saw none.

"Sit down, Joe. You know Mr. Caridius, of course?"

"Sure."

"Uh . . . Joe . . . Mr. Caridius here is in Congress, you know, as . . . as a regular machine representative."

"Sure, I know that."

"Well, he is wanting to get appointed to the Committee on Military Affairs, and there seems to be some opposition to his appointment."

Mr. Canarelli studied Myerberg.

"Yes, and how do I come in on that?"

"Well, you helped elect him in the first place . . . he's from your district."

"I know I did."

"And the opposition to Mr. Caridius seems to come from parties who are most closely bound up with the production of military supplies."

"What's the Littenham mob got against him?"

"Nothing, except he's a new man, not particularly friendly to them . . . and that committee controls military appropriations."

"Ye-eh . . . I see."

"Of course, if you saw fit to exert your influence to help him get on this committee, why . . . you'd have a friend on the Committee."

The little brunet man sat nodding with gradually increasing spleen. Finally he broke out:

"I believe I'll do that. What does that damn Littenham gang want to muscle into my racket for? I don't start no banks against him."

"I wouldn't say he was horning in. . . ."

"The hell you wouldn't. He's got two blocks of houses right in the street where I'm charging six dollars a house for membership in the Uptown Landlords' Mutual Protective Association. Hell, he might stand my graft! I stand his. When he collected a million-and-a-half-dollar bonus out of the Westover Bank where I keep my money, I didn't say anything. I says to myself, 'Hell, it's his racket!' But now because he has twenty or thirty little houses where I do business he squeals about paying me a little hundred and twenty a month . . . to hell with such a man!"

Myerberg made a gesture of annoyance.

"I keep telling him that Merritt Littenham has a legal right to draw bonuses out of his bank. I tell him if Littenham can frame his directors the bonuses are legal and the depositors and stockholders haven't a damn thing to say about it."

Canarelli turned and also began arguing at Caridius.

"Well, I say, Mr. Caridius, that I am in exactly the same fix. I place dues on houses, I should get my money even if the houses do belong to Merritt Littenham."

"But your collections are not legal!"

"Well, hell, they could be made legal easy enough. All I need is to get the state legislature to make a law that fraternal dues must be paid and fraternal organizations must be joined."

"Well, I don't know whether you could or couldn't make any such law," interposed Myerberg. "The point is Litten-

ham's corporation laws are made—made by corporation lawyers, so there is no longer any question about Littenham's bonus. You can either pay it or get out of his banks . . . into somebody else's banks."

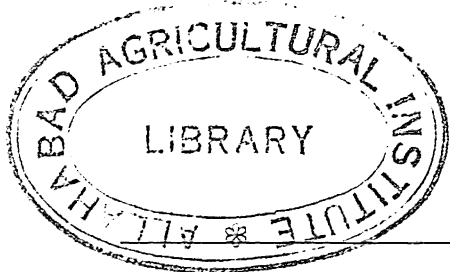
"By God, it'll be the same way about my houses one of these days!"

"Anyway, that's not what I asked you here to talk about."

"What is it you want to talk about?"

"Is Mr. Caridius going to get appointed to the Committee on Military Affairs?"

"Oh, that . . . yeh . . . yeh, if that has something to do with giving appropriations to Merritt Littenham's munitions plant, Mr. Caridius is going to be appointed on the Committee on Military Affairs. . . . I'll show the damn Littenham mob how to come horning into my racket!"



25

ONE MORNING several weeks later the Honorable Henry Lee Caridius set forth from the Albemarle Apartments for the airfield in quite an anticipatory mood. As his cab drew near his destination he found himself peering out of the window trying to see into other cabs. He noted a number of persons, women and men, but his curiosity continued unabated.

When he reached the field he saw the Washington plane had not yet started her motors, so he stood on the platform outside the little depot watching the taxis that entered the parking lot. Presently, when he heard the engines of the airship begin warming up, he became nervous. He peered earnestly at the incoming passenger cars. At last the minute

of departure was upon him. He walked quickly inside, bought a ticket, and asked the agent if a large girl had taken an earlier plane to Washington.

The agent nodded as he handed Caridius his ticket.

"Yes, several," he answered.

The politician looked at the fellow.

"Which," he inquired caustically, "planes or girls?"

He went on through the gate in a rancor against the agent. The first thing the traveling public knew airport ticket agents were going to be just as disrespectful a set of puppies as railway ticket agents!

After his fundamental disappointment had vented itself on ticket agents he enskied for Washington in a depressed mood. On his way over he thought of what a saving it would have been if Miss Littenham had traveled with him. He could have let the other half of her dog go as his personal baggage, and that would have saved her the expressage. He determined to mention the matter to her as soon as he saw her.

When Caridius reached his destination at the old House office building, he entered rather rapidly and walked down the corridor looking ahead toward his own suite, expecting to see the spotted form of a large dog lying in his doorway. Instead of that he found his office closed and locked. He applied his key and entered. The suite was quite empty. On a table were a pile of the unsigned letters that should have gone off the night before. He sat down to do them, and as he worked he kept listening for Miss Littenham's step in the corridor outside.

As he heard nothing he gradually became impatient with her, and he thought to himself, "Well, she gets in late and she gets off early, and I'm simply going to have to tell her that in the future——"

At this point, however, his office door opened, and Miss Littenham's entrance instantly cleared the atmosphere and put him in excellent spirits.

"Am I late?" asked the girl in concern.

"I don't think so . . ." looking at his watch . . . "I was signing these letters and didn't observe."

"Well, I am, I'm nearly an hour late," glancing at her own watch. "I wonder if we are together?" She came over and put her wrist beside his own. The contrast between the trim brown feminine and the white masculine forearms and hands produced somehow a pleasing impression quite irrespective of the fact that the two watches were almost precisely together.

"I was delayed," she explained, "because I went to see Krauseman before I left town."

The "town" of course was Megapolis, as both of them felt their Washington sojourn was a sort of modified rustication.

"You went to see Krauseman?"

"Why yes . . . he's a very nice old fellow . . . a bit pathetic, it seems to me, with his effort at collecting things."

"Doesn't he collect good things?" inquired Caridius, who was now taking much pleasure in their conversation although he did not know a breath about collecting anything.

"Well, his collections look as if he had picked them up himself."

Caridius did not quite see the pathos in a man walking downtown and collecting what he liked, but he nodded sympathetically nevertheless.

"I see . . . I see. . . ."

His thoughts returned with a faint uneasiness to Krauseman. He knew, of course, why she had gone to Krauseman . . . to see about landing him on the military committee. Now if Canarelli went to Krauseman to see about the same thing . . . still, he could rely on Krauseman taking the money of both applicants and not mentioning either of them to the other. That was one of the great advantages of working with a man of no principles: you could rely on him doing the right thing. Aloud he said:

"I wonder what a girl like you could possibly be going to see Krauseman about?"

"I hoped you would ask me that," returned Miss Littenham gravely.

"Well, I have," said Caridius, still more pleased.

The girl was looking at him now out of eyes that were, in this light, a deep, solemn pansy blue:

"Well, I asked Mr. Krauseman about getting another job."

"Another job?" echoed Caridius a little apprehensively. "Who for?"

"Why me . . . getting myself another job."

The man stared at her blankly.

"You don't mean you . . . you don't want another job?"

The girl looked back at him with an unhappy expression.

"Yes, I do."

"Why, what's wrong with this job? . . . You are not too hard worked, are you? . . . You . . ." he made a gesture . . . "you hardly ever come down in the morning, and when you do get here you turn right around and go back home again."

"I know my hours are terrible. I have often thought I ought to stay here more."

"Oh, I'm not complaining, I just . . . you know . . . didn't want to feel that I was working you too hard."

"Why, I don't work at all," admitted the girl with a turn of her hand.

"Well . . . it—it isn't the pay, is it?" he suddenly remembered. "By the way, the other half of your dog can go as my personal baggage if we can arrange to fly back and forth together."

"Listen," exclaimed Miss Littenham in a generous but unhappy tone, "I don't care phooey about expressing half my dog."

"Then what do you want to leave me for?" cried Caridius, deeply disturbed.

His manner was such that the girl felt an impulse to put a hand on his arm, but she did not.

"I tell you, it's because I now have a fair working idea of what a congressman does."

"Why, of course," he ejaculated blankly, "you were just getting to where I could depend on you to do the work."

"But don't you see," she pointed out regretfully, "that is the very time I would be ready to go to a new position?"

"Why, I don't see that at all."

"Of course. I am trying to learn what my father's business rests on, and . . . uh . . . well . . . it rests on everything."

The enormousness of Miss Littenham's task, and the necessity that she should absorb and move quickly if she ever meant to approximate her goal, dawned on Caridius.

"O-oh . . . I see . . . I see. . . Well, I am glad to have been of even a little service to you. . . . What—what have you planned to do next?"

Miss Littenham exorcised the regret from her own voice and began in a cheerful matter-of-fact tone:

"I thought I would enter some senator's office and see the workings of the Upper House. After that I had intended going into the office of our Secretary of Foreign Affairs, if I could give away my services there, or go into the United States Chamber of Commerce. . . . Look here, this won't put you out much in your office routine, will it?"

"If you dash off like this it will. My heaven, I know you are seldom here, but after all, the office doesn't run itself."

"Well, I'm here oftener than Congressman Bing's niece. She draws pay for being his private stenographer, and she hasn't been in Washington for twenty-six years."

"Listen, listen, I'm not complaining, either about you or Bing. That's all understood that congressmen appoint their relatives to be pages and secretaries who draw their pay and never show up. But you see you are different; you have gotten in the way of doing things here, and I'm going to miss you. In fact, I—I don't see how I'm going to get along without you." He stood pulling his chin. "When are you going, tomorrow or this afternoon?"

"Why, neither," cried the girl reproachfully. "I'm giving you advance notice now. You'll have plenty of time to get another girl and bring her here. I'll teach her the run of the office. I have too great an interest in business routine, Mr. Caridius, ever to upset it. In fact, when you come to think of it, about 20 per cent of all the business routine in America is connected somehow with Father's holdings, and if I upset any office at all I would upset my own family a little bit. . . . Isn't that a quaint idea?"

"It certainly is," said Caridius, not thinking about it.

"Look here," ejaculated the girl on a sudden thought, "Mr. Krauseman suggested to me that I get a position with Senator Loree when he comes up for reelection next time. . . ." She hesitated, stopped, then shook her head slightly. "No . . . I don't suppose that would do."

"Why wouldn't it do for you to get a place with him?" asked Caridius dispiritedly.

"Oh, that . . . it would, I probably will . . . that wasn't what I was thinking about."

"What were you thinking about?"

"I was thinking about you . . . but . . . as I say, I don't suppose it would work."

There was too much feminine elision in this for Caridius. He searched about for an angle from which her observations made sense.

"You mean you don't suppose I could get a job in his office?"

Miss Littenham began smiling in a dubious and very friendly way.

"No . . . not exactly. I meant . . . you know . . . when he comes up for reelection you . . . enter the race and get his office . . . then I could just stay on with you . . . and learn about the Senate."

Miss Littenham's notion gave Caridius a little luxurious twang in the middle of his chest.

"Oh no, I wouldn't consider entering a race against my

colleague in the Senate . . . a tried and trusty servant of the people. . . . Oh no!"

"Well, I was just thinking of my own pleasure," admitted Miss Littenham with a faint warmth in her face.

"That would coincide perfectly with my pleasure . . . having you stay in my office. . . . Look here, why are you so intent on . . . well, on doing all these things that you want to do? . . . Girls don't do them."

"Not American girls."

"What do you mean . . . not American girls?"

Miss Littenham looked at him with eyes, in this different angle of the light, a serious gray. They were underscored with lashes that were either naturally dark or mascaraed.

"If I really tell you what I mean, you won't laugh at me?"

"Why, of course not!" ejaculated Caridius, shocked at the idea that he could laugh at anything so intimate and heady as one of her confidences.

"Well . . . you know Bertha Krupp?"

"I've heard of her."

"Really now . . . you won't think I'm idiotic?"

"Go on . . . please . . . please go on!"

"Well, you know how she took charge of her father's works at Essen?"

Caridius nodded with a ray of understanding and sympathy which he had not felt for her before.

"My brother doesn't care much about business, and my father feels as if our family are sort of losing touch with . . . what we have. And Brother says it doesn't make any difference whether we do or don't, because experts are paid to keep in touch with it. So I just sort of held up Bertha Krupp to myself as a model." She tilted her head forward and studied him appraisingly from under slender swallow-wing eyebrows which must have been plucked. "You think I'm the most conceited girl in America."

The man made a gesture of despair. He wanted to take her in his arms and comfort her in the peculiar desolation

of trying to shepherd probably two hundred million dollars.

"Mary, I don't! My God, Mary, I think you are the pluckiest, bravest . . . I wish to heaven I could get Senator Loree's office and stay with you on at least part of your orbit."

"Well, it may not be conceited, but it's hopeless. This country really isn't adapted to establishing fortunes."

"Why, I thought this was the country where fortunes are made!"

"Made, yes; but not established. You see in Germany they have a dictator who can be relied upon. But over here we have nobody who is really always dependable. You take Krauseman: sometimes he fails in his jobberies. Some popular movement may break out among the people and knock him right over. Of course, he would jump up and declare that he started the movement himself. . . ." She broke off and began again:

"You see, in Germany the handling of business relies on the suppression of the people. In America it depends really on the inattention of the people. It makes big business ten times as hazardous here as it is there, because just any moment the people may decide to take some of the profits for themselves."

"Well, they never have done it," pointed out Caridius hopefully.

"That's because Father has always been able to set up a reform party to compete against the regular party which he keeps in power; then, when the reformers win now and then, it's all right anyway. But they could so easily get out of hand. It isn't so simple here as it has been in Germany, Italy and Russia."

Just at this point the buzzer in the office notified Caridius that a vote was being taken on the floor of the House.

"You'll have to go now," said the girl.

"Oh no, go on, tell me about yourself. . . ."

But here his office door opened and a heavy man with a broad furry-finished felt hat thrust in his head.

"How are you, Miss Littenham. . . . Going out, Caridius?"

"Yes, sure . . . wait for me."

Congressman Bing withdrew his head.

"Be right here."

"Damn the luck," murmured Caridius. "A man can't talk to his secretary five minutes without being interrupted. . . ."

"Why, we've been talking all morning."

"Well, have it your way, I thought it was about five minutes. . . . Don't leave till I get back."

"I'll be here a month or two . . . until the election."

"Well . . . good-bye."

He caught himself. He came within a breath of leaning forward and kissing her good-bye. It shocked him as he went out of the room. It was one of the damndest things he had ever nearly done. Suppose he had! What would have happened?

A little shaken by his narrow escape, he joined Mr. Bing in the corridor.

"On your way over to the House?" he observed.

"Why no, I'm going to the Stationery office."

"Stationery office?"

"Yes, it's in the basement."

"Well . . . are you going down to get some paper or something?"

"No, I'm going down to get pay for the paper I didn't use. It just struck me that maybe you didn't know about that, so I came by and got you."

"If you don't use any paper, can you take it out in money?"

"Sure," invited Mr. Bing cordially, "come down with me and we'll find out what your balance is."

Mr. Bing led the way to the elevator, and the two dropped below. The two men walked on back to the Stationery office, where a genial old gentleman was in attendance.

"Look here," said Caridius to the genial old gentleman,

"doesn't that portion of my allowance which I don't use up return to the government?"

"It never has yet," said the man in charge, beginning to laugh.

"It's this way," said Bing to Caridius: "the government hires the members of the Senate and the House on the same terms that the Southern people used to hire their old negro mammies for cooks."

"What were those terms?"

"So much cash and whatever they could pick up in the kitchen."

Mr. Bing and the clerk fell into genial laughter.

"Look up Caridius' balance," suggested Mr. Bing, "and let him see what he's got."

The man went off and presently returned with a half sheet of paper with figures on it.

Caridius looked at it in surprise.

"Well, I won't take this in cash," he said, "I'm going to trade it out."

"Why not?" inquired Bing.

"I came into office on a reform ticket," explained Caridius seriously.

"That reminds me," burst out the genial gentleman, "there was a congressman in here about eight years ago who wouldn't take the cash either for conscientious reasons . . . he traded it out. . . . What'll you have, Mr. Caridius?"

"What have you got?"

"Oh, you don't have to stick to what I've got. I'll order anything you want on your stationery allowance . . . diamonds . . . jewelry . . . bric-à-brac . . . automobiles . . . you see it's so seldom a really conscientious man comes along, I take a great pleasure in getting him exactly what he wants."

Caridius pondered what he did want.

"You know I've always wanted a gold cigarette case."

The man started back for a catalog.

"Solid gold?"

"Yes, I have always wanted a solid gold cigarette case."

The man came back looking through his list.

"Now you haven't been here so very long, Mr. Caridius, and here is one that comes within twenty-five dollars of the amount."

"Well, look here, I don't want to pay twenty-five dollars."

Mr. Bing cut in with a solution of the difficulty.

"Here, Governor," he suggested roundly, "why don't you just advance him his next quarter's allowance and let him take his pick of any of the cigarette cases. After all, that case is going to last him a lifetime."

"By George, I'll just do that: it isn't once in a blue moon that a really conscientious man comes in here and refuses to take his stationery allowance."

When Caridius finished his purchase and he and Mr. Bing had gone out into the corridor again they saw Representative Orton hurrying by toward the elevator. Caridius remembered Orton as the man so violently opposed to war profiteering that he voted against all bills to stop it because they were too weak.

Bing tucked his wallet with the money he had just collected into his inside pocket and called out expansively:

"Hey oh, Orton, where you going?"

"Telegraph office."

"What's your rush?"

"My God, don't you know what's just happened?"

"No I don't," said Bing, coming to attention.

"Why, we're off the gold standard!"

"What?"

"We can't stick it out any longer. We're to have a cheaper currency. America's gone off the gold standard!" He hurried on toward the elevator.

Caridius and Bing stood staring for a moment, deeply shocked at the news. It seemed the financial equivalent of a declaration of war. They started hurrying back to their offices trying to forecast to the extent of their ability as

American citizens and members of Congress how this would affect their personal fortunes.

26

CARIDIUS and Mr. Bing hurried through the subway tunnel that leads from the old House office to the Capitol building. As they strode along Caridius wondered what effect America's desertion of the gold standard would have on the Littenham fortune. He was half minded to go tell Mary Littenham and see what she would say. She was such a clear-headed person. The two hurried on, however, to the elevator at the other end of the subway and were lifted to the floor of the House. As the guard opened the door and they entered, a bedlam of voices broke on their ears. The House clerk was reading a bill. The floor leader caught sight of the two men as they entered and beckoned them to him. They pushed their way to his table among the circular benches on the crowded milling floor. He made a gesture and shouted to them above the confusion:

"This bill that's up for the third reading, we want to pass it without debate if we can get the members of the House to agree."

"Why without debate?" called Caridius.

"If we debate it, it will give it publicity and bring opposition to it from the public at large, but if it hangs over and we don't pass it, it will raise all the women's clubs against every member here . . . the clubs are sponsoring it."

"What is the bill?"

"You know, voting a million and a half dollars to carve the Rocky Mountains into statuary . . . that woman's club bill."

"A million and a half dollars won't start it."

"Certainly not, but we have put a joker in the bill that one mountain must be completed before they start another. We thought the women and the sculptors would get into a squabble over the first mountain they tackled and it would all fall through . . . we wouldn't be out much. Besides that, a million and a half will look enormous to the women."

"Why, such a bill ought to be killed!" cried Caridius.

"Certainly, certainly, but let the Senate kill it. That's what the Senate's for . . . to kill bills the House is afraid to tamper with. Anyway, the House represents the will of the people, not their brains."

As the House clerk continued his reading which was inaudible in the uproar, Caridius saw Congressman Winton making his way toward him across the floor. He came up smiling and saluting.

"Well, I was able to do something for you after all, Mr. Caridius," he said in a congratulatory tone.

From high aloft the Speaker pounded and shouted for order.

"Gentlemen, let us have quiet. Allow the clerk to continue his reading!"

Mr. Winton paused momentarily in his congratulations and gave the Speaker a glance over his shoulder. A half second of quiet flickered through the house; then Caridius called in the reestablished uproar:

"What is it, Mr. Winton?"

"Why, I brought your name before the Committee on Committees, and in view of your well-known qualifications, your wide interest and information about the military arm of our government, I was able to get you assigned to the standing Committee on Military Affairs."

Mr. Bing turned and grasped Caridius' hands.

"I congratulate you, Caridius, and I congratulate you and your fellow committeemen, Mr. Winton, in selecting such a capable, patriotic man for this post. America need never fear defeat while she is defended by such a Nestor of wisdom and such a Paladin of personal courage."

The Speaker aloft pounded his hammer.

"Silence! Order! Let the House come to order!"

Caridius thanked Mr. Winton very heartily for his support before the Committee on Committees and a little later returned to his own office. On his way through the underground passage he wondered precisely who had championed his cause before the Committee on Committees. Mary Littenham might have done it, and then Canarelli may have had some influence. He preferred to think that Miss Littenham was really the author of his success, although Canarelli had said he was going to see Krauseman about the matter.

When he reached his own suite he mentioned his appointment to his private secretary in as casual a manner as possible and watched her closely to judge whether or not it surprised her. She congratulated him, but she was such a composed person he could tell nothing from her manner. This gave the congressman a faint wounded feeling from an odd angle. It was not because he did not know whether she had helped him or not; it was because she apparently did not care a great deal whether he had obtained the appointment or not. He realized, uncomfortably, that an appointment to any particular committee would be a mere detail in the wide but extremely thin view Miss Littenham took of life.

"Well, anyway, I have you to thank for getting me into this suite of offices on the street level," he observed, hoping this would lead her to say she had helped him with his committee appointment, if she really had.

"Oh, that wasn't I. You have Senator Loree to thank for that."

"But he did it for you?"

"No, he did it for my father."

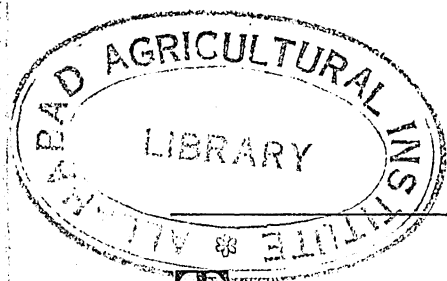
"Well, then, your father did it for you."

"He did it for me because I preferred the street-level offices. I don't like elevators or walking upstairs."

Caridius then saw that he and his secretary were on relations as impersonal as any employer and employed in the building. And he was glad of it. It was a relief to him to know that he had never felt any warmth toward his secretary, now that the warmth was removed.

Miss Littenham too was pleased in her way. When her employer had gone out of the office that morning she had been shocked and vaguely ashamed that she had told Caridius of her ambition to emulate Bertha Krupp, Frau von Bohlen und Halbach. Never before had she revealed to anyone her involved and no doubt impossible ambition. And to this indiscretion she had had the bad taste to say, almost in so many words, that her brother was a wastrel and a disappointment to her father. When Caridius and Mr. Bing had gone away together she had resolved to mend her ways and return to the cool detachment with which she had heretofore faced the world.

The great Dane, lying in the inner office, got to his feet, undulated his body in a vast yawn and walked out of the door into the corridor, where the atmosphere was pleasanter.



27

THE TENSE surcharged indifference which the Honorable Henry Lee Caridius and his secretary Miss Littenham felt for each other was further heightened several days later by the girl telling her employer that she had asked her father to see him in Pine Manor that afternoon.

Caridius was on the verge of saying:

"I'm already on the Committee of Military Affairs, it is not necessary for me to take up his time." But he didn't say that, he said it was very thoughtful of his secretary to make the appointment.

Later the two left the old House office for the air field without a great deal to say to each other. The only incident of the trip which impressed Caridius was when they maneuvered Rajah into the taxicab. During their effort to stow the dog inside and leave room for themselves, their arms and shoulders pressed together for a few seconds, and a kind of tingling sweetness flowed deliberately from the contact down through the congressman's whole body. During the rest of their journey together Caridius disregarded this incident.

Their talk on the plane was casual, about this and that office detail. They reached Megapolis and set off in another taxicab for the Littenham country place.

On this day, when they arrived, Miss Littenham did not drop the motor at the gate and walk through the woods. She drove straight on to the porte-cochère under the yellow towers of Pine Manor.

The girl asked the footman if her father was at home. He was not but had telephoned that he had started from his office.

In her home, as hostess, Miss Littenham was forced to take on a little more warmth. She led the way through a Gothic hallway, through a reception room, into a picture gallery where three french windows opened onto a tiled terrace. Out here they found a number of persons drinking cocktails. Miss Littenham introduced Caridius all around, and the group nodded and how-de-doeed and immediately went on with their drinking and talking.

A young man and a girl were discussing whether a certain race horse would be in condition at Havre de Grace. Two girls and a man were discussing the grips for putting

used by the different professional golfers and illustrating with a cane.

A tall youth of mephistophelian features was arguing with a woman about academic pictures.

"Now look at that view yonder," he said, waving a long thin hand toward a vista of dark pines against which were set the white columns of a distant Greek peristyle, "why should a painter try to produce a scene like that photographically?"

"Well . . . it's beautiful," argued the girl.

"No, it isn't beautiful, it's obvious. Real beauty connotes the interesting, the unusual, and . . . of course . . . the rhythmic and symmetrical. Now that scene is merely rhythmic and symmetrical but without interest. That is the trouble with academic pictures. They hold so little interest, you can't look at them but once. Step inside Father's gallery there and see for yourself. Look around. What do you see? Nothing. You can't give your attention to a single picture. They are all lost hanging on the wall."

"That's an odd idea," observed Caridius to Mary Littenham in a lowered tone, for he found himself quite able to distinguish the pictures from the surrounding gallery.

"That's my brother," explained Miss Littenham privately. "He collects ultra-moderns and remembers what the art dealers said when they sold them to him."

She led Caridius to a little table, and a servant came and poured them drinks.

Presently a girl who had been introduced to Caridius but whose name he did not know came up to their table. Caridius started to pull her up a chair, but she stopped him saying she was afraid if she sat down she might get bored before she could get under way again.

"What are you two talking about?" she inquired by way of testing their conversational vintage.

"We were talking about all this talk," observed Miss Littenham, smiling.

"Oh, you are," ejaculated the second girl, lifting her

voice a trifle so she would be heard by the near-by tables. "Well, all this talk is distinctly a sexual manifestation." She made a gesture that included the terrace. "Conversation by and large is that."

"All conversation?" inquired Caridius.

"Oh yes, it's a mixing together of our mental ova and sperm in an effort to generate an idea."

"But quite often just men talk together?"

"Homosexuality," declared the girl.

"Surely it is nothing more than an intellectual exchange," laughed Caridius.

The girl pointed a finger at him.

"Now you are laughing. But really it is a serious theory of mine. No two persons really enjoy talking to each other without that something called sympathy, and sympathy is nothing but a pale form of physical attraction. Then there are persons nobody can talk to. They are the intellectual puritans, and, illuminatingly enough, you'll find most of them come from the New England states."

Miss Littenham laughed at the girl's earnestness and arose from her chair.

"Yonder comes Father," she explained. "I brought Mr. Caridius over especially to see Father."

"Well, good-bye," said the girl. "Hope you enjoy your talk with Mr. Littenham."

She was a conversational tramp and turned away to break into another table.

Miss Littenham and Caridius reëntered the french window and passed through several rooms and up a stairway to a small study on the second floor. Here the girl introduced Caridius to a smallish, sandy-haired blue-eyed man who looked as if he were appraising his caller with great precision. He was most genial.

"You have come to Pine Manor two weeks before our best flowers are out. We must have you up again a little later. I was very greatly pleased to hear you had found a place on the congressional committee you preferred, Mr. Caridius."

"I considered myself fortunate," agreed Caridius.

"I am always glad when we get a forward-looking man on the Committee on Military Affairs. It's a responsible position when the whole world is poised over war and perhaps chaos."

"Man's instinct for some sort of organization would probably keep him out of chaos," suggested Caridius.

"Exactly, but the organizations which have always held human life out of anarchy are military and religious organizations. Here in America the religious scaffolding has given away. Only a few of us oldsters still turn to God. The only form left for the younger generation is the military form. If they cannot be regimented from within they must be regimented from without, or, as I say, there will be chaos."

The financier's observations held that extrinsic weight and authority which flow out of a great money success. Caridius agreed with him.

"That is why an appointment to the Committee on Military Affairs is one of the most important of the congressional berths. You are dealing with the last social form of any country before its descent into Avernus."

"You don't think our country is threatened, do you?"

"All other countries are militarizing."

"That is to protect themselves from invasion."

The sandy-haired man shook his head.

"Germany, Russia, Italy, France are conscripting great armies not to fight exterior enemies but to forestall social disintegration. When marriage has ceased to function, when the home has vanished, when children are educated by the State, men instinctively turn to armies again. China has long been an example of simple military existence. Russia is an example of military life applied not only to war but to industry."

"But that is decadence."

"Certainly, it is either the decay of individualism or it is a stage of society that has not yet reached individualism."

The financier's theories produced a kind of glimmer in Caridius, something large and enveloping but which he could not quite lay a finger on.

"Then you are against militarizing America?"

"Certainly not. I am for a bigger army and navy."

"But wouldn't that help bring on the decadence you mention?"

"No, it would merely be an insurance against it. We would establish cadres into which our population could fall if our individualistic society finally succumbed. And we drift toward it all the time. Our commercial associations, our labor battalions, our boy scouts, our fraternal societies, our labor unions, our big scientific research laboratories, they all show the trend toward a military régime in our private life. It is the external symptom of an internal disease. It means our nation has ceased to be religious. We have forgotten God. So we cease to act as autonomous individuals looking to God for guidance; we act as cogs in a machine driven by some dictator. I myself am a Baptist."

"Yes, of course, I have heard of your munificence to your church," said Caridius.

"By the way, are you acquainted with a Mr. Kumata?"

The congressman was surprised at the sudden shift.

"Yes, I know him."

"He is very much interested in a new form of powder our army is developing."

"Is the army developing it?" asked Caridius with interest.

"That's what I understand," replied Mr. Littenham carefully, "and if that should prove correct, I believe it would be very helpful to our export trade to place this powder on the foreign market."

"But wouldn't that be a war secret?" suggested Caridius.

"It is according to how you look at it, I mean from a national viewpoint."

"I'm afraid I don't quite follow."

"Well, all improvements in arms and munitions can be looked upon as military secrets with a speculative value in

the future, or as financial assets with a positive value in the present. The question then becomes, which is the best for the nation, to hold or sell? I think, since military science is advancing so rapidly, the future value of war secrets becomes questionable. I think any given secret will become obsolete in a few years and that it is best for our national health to sell out on a bull market. I adhere to that time-honored motto, Mr. Caridius, 'Never sell America short.' "

"Yes . . . but would preserving a war secret be selling her short?"

"Why, certainly. It would be assuming that our inventors would not discover something far more efficient in the future and refusing to give America the financial advantage of her present position. It would be selling America short."

Caridius could see dimly, very dimly, all the ideas which the financier advanced. Their talk drifted on to the market, then the government's recent desertion of the gold standard. Mr. Littenham highly praised the patriotism of all those citizens who were turning in their gold to the governmental banks at the government's request. He predicted that their sacrifice would really cost them nothing, that the increase of wages and prices following the governmental absorption of gold would more than compensate them for any direct loss they would sustain.

"And with this rising market assured, Mr. Caridius," went on the banker, "I suppose you yourself are making some investments against almost certain future advances?"

At this suggestion from one of the great financial powers of America Caridius, who had begun to grow a little sleepy, became fully awake.

"I had thought about it," he admitted, "but I have been so busy at Washington."

"Your banker should attend to those details for you," observed Mr. Littenham, "that is what bankers are for: to act as financial specialists for professional and technical men."

"As a matter of fact," said Caridius, remembering with a

twinge of humor the difficulty he used to have in persuading his uncle to pay his office rent, "as a matter of fact, I have never used a banker in that capacity."

"Then you should make a start, Mr. Caridius," advised the financier roundly. "Every man owes it to himself to be prosperous. You are a young man; your career is now in its more fortunate phase; you should take advantage of your opportunities."

"I . . . suppose that's true," agreed Caridius in considerable suspense as to what was coming next.

"Then why don't you do it?" inquired Mr. Littenham simply.

"Well . . . as a matter of fact, I have . . . kept no strict account of the money I have made . . . it comes . . . and goes."

"Certainly, I understand that . . . the true political temperament."

"So to make a beginning of investment would be . . . awkward."

"Why no, not at all. I imagine your credit would be excellent in any bank. The modern business world is run on credit, you know. If cash were demanded on every transaction, business would stop. No, cash is the small change of credit. It is really a bookkeeper's convenience."

"But the trouble is," pointed out Caridius expectantly, "before a man can get credit, he must have credit. It's a perpetual-motion machine, once you get it started, but it is very hard to start."

"Nonsense, nonsense, Mr. Caridius. Take the Westover bank. It would feel it an honor to have your name on its list of clients."

"I also would feel very highly honored," confessed Caridius, but just here the politician's conscience which pricked him at the most inopportune times pulled him up, "but . . . er . . . Mr. Littenham, would it be proper? . . ."

The financier straightened.

"Proper? Is it proper for a man to provide for his nearest and dearest . . ."

"I mean, me, a congressman . . ."

"Does a politician have to immolate himself privately to serve his country publicly? I hope our civilization has passed the day, Mr. Caridius, when it requires human sacrifices."

"I mean, for exactly your bank to offer me credit."

The financier was relieved.

"Oh, that's it. I wish you had mentioned that at first. Why, my dear Mr. Caridius, we have on our list of preferred clients senators, diplomats, members of the cabinet, judges of the Supreme Court; a roster of America's wisest and greatest and best. Have no fear on that score. You are in most excellent company. You have no idea, I suppose, what you would like to invest in?"

Caridius sat for a few seconds thinking; then he suddenly remembered this last question and answered:

"No, I haven't."

"Well, that's just as well, you can leave that to the bank. . . . You have no idea, I take it, how much stock you would care to acquire?"

"I—I have very little ready money."

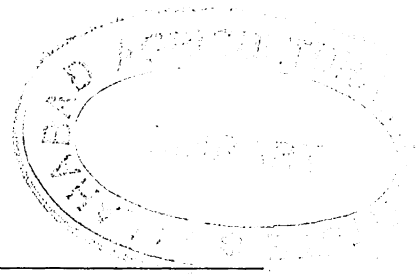
Mr. Littenham wagged a thin tissue-paper palm.

"The Westover will take care of that."

"But what security will I give?"

"Mr. Caridius, the stocks purchased for your account will be held as security for your indebtedness; and above and beyond all such material pawns the bank has for its security your unblemished name, Mr. Caridius."





WHEN THE INTERVIEW with her father was over, Mary Littenham ordered Rajah brought from the kennels, and she and her guest, the Honorable Henry Lee Caridius, set forth from the manor to walk to the entrance of the estate.

The great Dane was enthusiastic during these walks through the grounds, and now, free of his leash, he dashed ahead in great circles with room enough to be graceful.

Caridius' head still throbbed faintly with a slight dizziness of anticipation of what the financier would do for him. He and his hostess set out toward the distant Greek peristyle which stood in sharp relief against the green-black reaches of the pines. As they drew away from the manor someone called from the terrace, and Miss Littenham waved a hand back at the group.

She looked at Caridius with that feeling of intimacy and admiration that springs up between two persons who hold a disparaging and supercilious attitude toward a group of persons who are distinctly supercilious toward them.

"Did you know," she asked pointedly, "that the largest department store in Megapolis doesn't pay a cent to the heirs who own it?"

"Doesn't it make anything?"

"It makes eight or ten million a year, but the management takes it up in salaries and improvements and what not. The heirs, who have no direct connection with the business, have been expropriated."

"It must be difficult to live in a place like this and really pay any attention to—to the business mechanism that supports it," agreed Caridius, man-like, softening the blow the girl had aimed at the group on the terrace.

"Well, yes, that's true, I suppose," agreed Miss Littenham, falling in with her companion's charitable attitude, "but I don't really see how——" She broke off.

"What?" asked the man with a feeling of sharp deprivation at her stopping.

"Oh, nothing."

Caridius was gyved to be excluded thus from the mental intimacies of his companion.

"I would really like to know what you had in mind, Miss Littenham," he said gravely. "We have so little time really to ourselves; in the office we are interrupted."

Both man and girl felt a delicate titillation in this automatic groping toward a mental intimacy.

"Why, I don't know what I was about to say now."

"Something about you didn't see how . . ."

The realization that he was really following every word she said had its influence on Miss Littenham.

"Well, it wasn't much after all . . . just how persons could spend their whole lives over games and races and pictures and plays when the actual . . . you know . . . movement of life itself is so complicated and—and absorbing."

"Certainly, certainly," agreed Caridius, contrasting the warmth and vitality of the girl at his side with the adynamic terrace.

"The way all this is—is set up," she made an encompassing gesture at the grounds around her, "is a hundred times more intricate and absorbing than—than . . . well, a game. . . . Banks . . . papers . . . munitions factories . . . politics in the state, politics in Washington . . . why, really, don't you see Father's holding all this in equilibrium makes the performance of say a champion bridge team look like infant's play?"

Caridius nodded.

"That's what's really back of all your experimental jobs . . . the game?"

"Partly . . . but Father has put this all together, and I'd like to hold it and add something to it if I can. . . . Don't you feel that way, Mr. Caridius?"

"I understand you completely," declared the politician, catching the ebullience of great wealth and honestly forgetting the one-room office in the Lecksher Building which his uncle had rented for him.

"Well, it's seldom I am understood . . . it's seldom I really talk to anybody. You remember that day in the office when I told you about wanting to copy Bertha Krupp: it made me feel very queer afterwards. I thought to myself, 'Well, why in the world did I say anything to him about that?' "

Caridius looked at her with sudden illumination.

"Is that why you . . . well . . . acted so differently afterward?"

"I didn't know I was different."

"Oh, you were . . . tremendously."

"How?"

"Well . . . when I left you in the office that day, as I was just starting out . . ."

"Yes?"

Caridius hesitated.

"Well . . . no . . . nothing. . . ."

"Why, Mr. Caridius," ejaculated the girl with a tantalized expression, "don't leave me guessing like that!"

The politician laughed a little self-consciously.

"When I began telling you this I hadn't thought it all out."

"But please don't stop now. . . . I went on a while ago when you asked me to."

"But I can't tell you what I had in mind at—at a time so early in our acquaintance and—and maintain my self-respect."

"Of course you can't. Nobody can tell his real thoughts

and maintain his self-respect. That's the dilemma of morals. If you falsify, your self-respect's gone; if you don't falsify, it is also gone. You might as well tell me: you come out with nothing either way."

The congressman cleared his throat.

"Well, it sounds very . . . uh . . . well, when I started out of the office that day to join Bing . . . you don't remember it. . . ."

"Yes, I do."

"Well, I . . . came very near leaning over and—and kissing you good-bye. . . . You know," he hurried, "just impulsively, no disrespect meant at all."

The girl glanced at him, then walked on in silence to the white peristyle. She paused beside the marble steps and stood looking at the little pond of water.

"You are not offended?" asked Caridius uneasily.

"No, certainly not, but . . . that was the reason why I decided to be more reserved."

Caridius caught his breath. He took her hand which lay on the marble step beside her with a feeling that somehow its possession would help him understand her.

"Do you mean that you felt the . . . same sort of . . . ?"

"Really, I think our emotional life should be impulsive like that . . . don't you?"

"Why, of course . . . surely. . . ."

"I think it is the only moral thing to do . . . don't you?"

"Mary, you know I do. . . ."

Caridius was reaching his arms after this unbelievable invitation, but the girl put a hand on his wrist.

"No, don't . . . not right now," she said a little unevenly. "Just anybody can kiss you and hug you, and there are so few you can talk to. . . . Of course . . . I know . . . when you start . . . nothing else makes very much difference."

"What do you . . . really want?" asked Caridius holding her hand to his lips.

"Oh, let's talk about . . . about us . . . before we go on."

"What is there to say about us?"

"Not so very much."

"We are the only two things in the world . . . the manor yonder, the pond and the pines, they are just a green-and-silver circle about us."

"There's a room under that pond."

"A what?"

"A room, an underground vault. Father had it made."

"What for?"

"Why, I think he is afraid of a strike among the workers, an outbreak of his bank depositors, a revolution of the people . . . it's a retreat in time of great need."

With the girl almost in his arms, Caridius followed the conversation amid a luxurious incoherence.

"What gave him such an idea?"

"Everything . . . strikes here . . . what's happening in Europe. . . ."

"Listen . . . let's look at the place."

"What . . . Europe?"

"No, the vault under the pond."

"No, no, no, we won't go down there. . . . I think we'd better start toward the gate, Mr. Caridius."

"For God's sake, don't call me Mr. Caridius!"

"But, now listen, I'd better. We are going to work in the office together, if I get in the way of calling you Henry it would slip out . . . anywhere."

"Well . . . yes . . . that's the truth. . . ."

"No, don't . . . don't put your arms around me . . . don't kiss me here . . . now that is something else . . . we . . . we won't stop."

"But, my God, what about this . . . what will we do?"

Miss Littenham stood up and pulled him up by the hand.

"Let's start for the gate."

"I don't want to go."

"It's a long walk through the pines."

Caridius moved away with her very unwillingly.

"I feel as if I were walking off leaving paradise," he complained in a romantic voice.

"Listen, Mr. Caridius, we are not the terrace, you know, we don't have to act . . . just as everybody acts."

"What do you mean by the terrace?"

"Oh, those artistic people who live in the present. That is what all art is, an intense concentration in the present, and the moral, the provident thing, is a concentration on the future. That is the whole difference between morals and art: both are entirely selfish, but one takes promissory notes while the other demands cash."

"But, Mary," begged the man, "let's not be so provident. . . ."

Miss Littenham started moving away toward the pine grove. Caridius got up and put a determined arm around her.

"Mary, listen . . . wait . . . I love you. . . ."

"Be careful of Rajah," she warned sharply.

A shock went through Caridius at the thought of the enormous dog attacking him. He looked at the beast.

"You don't suppose he would . . ."

"I don't know . . . but if he should charge you, he might kill you."

They started walking soberly together through the pine-tum, the dog following.

"I don't believe he would do anything to me," said Caridius. "He knows me." He talked as if both he and Miss Littenham were eager for the embrace but the dog had prevented them.

"The reason I am doing this," said the girl frankly, "is on account of your wife."

"My wife!" Caridius was quite taken aback. He had forgot Ellora.

"Yes, persons such as you and I just can't casually forget wives and husbands. I don't know why we can't . . . we can't."

"I want you more than any woman I ever knew; it would be heaven . . ."

"But I don't want to drop into the rôle of one of these . . . what shall I call them . . . American morganatic marriages?"

"You mean . . . just affairs," said Caridius, a little shamefaced.

"Yes, I want my love life to be more dignified than that."

"Of course," agreed the politician, frowning in thought.

"You love your wife, don't you?"

"Why, a man doesn't think about love when he's with his wife."

"Would you be happy without her?" inquired Miss Littenham, quite impersonally, as they entered the pines.

"I would be happy if I knew everything was all right with her."

"That asks the same question from a different angle, would she be happy without you?"

"I think she would be very happy if she knew there was no other woman in my life. If I should live up to Ellora's ideal for me, I don't believe I would reach the passionate height of a monk, I would be something more on the order of a capon or a mule."

The girl did not smile at this cynicism. She walked soberly through the tall sienna-colored columns of the pines.

"Do you suppose she would accept a settlement of some sort?"

"You mean a divorce?"

"There is no reason why we should muss up our lives with anything clandestine. The whole object of divorce is to give people a second chance."

"Listen, Mary," said Caridius, halting, "if Ellora doesn't want this divorce, if she is all cut up about it . . . I . . . I wouldn't do it any more than I would throw a child who was riding with me out of a motorcar."

"The gate is right around that turn in the path," said the girl.

Caridius caught his breath.

"Then we'll say good-bye here?"

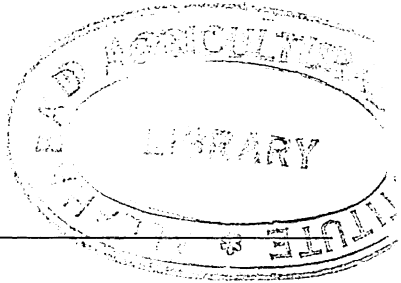
"Yes."

The next moment a kind of trembling incredulity filled the man that a girl of so exalted a station actually should be in his arms. Her hair had a thin fragrance, something like the pines themselves. The shape of her small intense lips on his; the feel of her body and full bosom pressing his own swept over Caridius with a heady completion of the promise made by the casual touching of their hands at the airport in Washington.

The rest of their walk to the gate was delayed and delayed. They began talking presently in unsteady undertones of Caridius obtaining an immediate divorce from his wife. It was, they both thought, the only moral thing to do.

Near them, the great spotted harlequin nosed with slack interest at a hole under the root of a pine.

29



AT THE ENTRANCE of the estate one of the servants awaited Caridius with a station wagon. The politician entered the car, waved a hand at Mary Littenham standing at the gate, and then the wagon rattled away along the high brick wall that marked the Littenham boundary.

To Caridius, as he drove away, it seemed that he could never return to the enchantment he was leaving behind. Out on the commonplace road, marriage with Mary Littenham appeared impossible. That he should actually gain a posi-

tion in that great house was fanciful. And then, of course, there was Ellora.

The wagon rattled on down the road to a station on an interurban track. At the V-shaped shed, the driver stopped and let Caridius out. The man had a card time-table showing the schedule of the Sunday, Saturday and weekday trains. Now, like all commuters, he spent several minutes deciding which was which.

"A train ought to be along here in about a half hour, sir, I think," he announced uncertainly. Then he deposited Caridius' briefcase on the seat, received a tip and with a "Thank you, sir," got in his wagon and drove back to Pine Manor.

The sound of an approaching interurban corrected the chauffeur's misinformation. An electric train of two cars, both quite empty of passengers, drew up at the way station. As Caridius got aboard and dropped his dime into the till the conductor suggested it was a fair day.

Caridius nodded absently and returned to his musings about Mary Littenham.

"I don't pick up many fares through these estates. I won't get two a week from the station you got on at. They all go to town in their big automobiles. You see that big brick wall . . . where it quits . . . that's the end of the Merritt Littenham estate."

"It has fine trees," said Caridius, thinking of the girl he had left standing beneath them.

"Huh, it ort to. They tell me he keeps a tree doctor who don't do nothing but doctor his trees. . . . Well, people like that, no telling what they're goin' to want, and . . . by gad . . . git."

The conductor's talk somehow placed Pine Manor at a greater distance from Caridius. It was a far cry from his simplicities to the self-conscious striving toward smartness on the terrace, or the winding intricacies of the financier in his study, or the queer, lonely effort of Mary Littenham to

catch in her own hands the world that supported them all.

About an hour later Caridius reached the Albemarle Apartments and found Ellora in one of those mixtures of relief and anger which move a wife when she fears that her husband has met with a traffic accident and then sees that he hasn't; that he has been merely thoughtless, not mangled.

"Where have you been?"

"Mr. Littenham asked me to come out to his estate."

"Not Merritt Littenham!"

"Yes."

"What in the world did he want?"

"You mustn't mention this . . . he wanted me to start an account in the Westover bank."

"Why, you haven't got any money!"

"I know it, it is an investment account."

"Well, don't you have to have money to invest?"

"No, the Westover is going to credit me, and then anything they buy for me will be security for what I owe them."

Ellora was amazed at the simplicity of making investments.

"Well I declare. . . . But, Henry, you should have telephoned me that you would be delayed. I have been calling up the airport to find out if there had been an airplane wreck."

"Have you, darling?" asked Caridius, quite touched.

"Why, of course I would think that when you didn't come home."

Caridius held out his arms to her.

"Do you really love me, Ellora?"

"Why, honey, of course I do, especially when you ask me if I love you."

She came into his embrace, hugged him tightly with her arms around his neck and gave him an ardent kiss of rejoicing that nothing really had happened to him, that his plane had arrived safely and he was alive and well.

During the rest of the evening, confronted by the simple fact of his wife, Caridius not only doubted the possibility of

a union with Mary Littenham, he questioned even whether or not he desired it. In Ellora's presence, physical desire for any woman whatsoever vanished. She was a writ of manumission from the ancient dictatorship of sex, and in the cool detachment of her presence the specific act of love was reduced to Voltaire's famous cynicism.

Ellora's influence, however, was a soporific of brief duration. On the following morning, when Caridius arose and left his wife sleeping in her bed, the thought that within the hour he would be flying to Washington with Mary Littenham stirred him like a reveille.

As he shaved and dressed and breakfasted alone, he imagined Mary Littenham also bathing and dressing and breakfasting in Pine Manor. He fancied himself with her, her lover, helping her plan the day in the overworld of directing wealth in which she lived. And within one hour he would be flying with her again to Washington. A sense of well-being filled the congressman. He dressed himself with particular care, glanced at his watch to be sure that he would reach the aviation field before she did, then walked out on the boulevard and hailed a taxicab.

He lifted his hand to the chauffeur and said, "Fine morning," as he got inside.

The fellow started his machine, then, at a loud noise behind him, remained at the curb until it had passed.

"Look it," he grunted, nodding his head, "another of them damn tanks going by."

Caridius looked and saw an armored truck speeding along the boulevard.

"Where's it headed?" inquired Caridius, whose good feeling put him in a mood to talk to the world.

"Don't know . . . two of 'em jammed by me this morning as I was coming to pick you up."

"Coming to pick me up?" ejaculated Caridius.

"Sure, I come by to pick you up ever' morning since I found out your schedule. . . . Hadn't you noticed it was me ever' time?"

"I thought that was accidental," said Caridius, who hadn't observed the driver at all.

"No sir, I count you as a reg'lar fare. . . . Yes, as I say, they jammed by me and damn near took a fender off."

"Whyn't you call a cop?"

The chauffeur gave a brief laugh.

"Hell, there was two cops settin' on the seat with the driver."

Caridius smiled. The little unexpected turns of life appealed to him as agreeable humor on this particular morning. He was now drawing close enough to the flying field for him to begin glancing at other cabs for his first glimpse of the girl. He was interrupted by the driver saying in a tone of casual surprise:

"Look at the planes . . . sure are a bunch of planes today."

Caridius quit watching the taxicabs and saw two large biplanes and a low-wing monoplane in the west end of the field surrounded by three armored trucks and a squad of policemen.

As Caridius' cab turned into the parking space, his driver called to another taximan:

"Hey, Johnny, what's the big idea over there?"

Johnny waved a hand toward the guards lading the planes.

"You've heard of the geese that lays the golden eggs, that's them."

"Golden eggs . . . what you mean, golden eggs?"

"Them trucks is loading gold into the planes."

"The hell they are!"

"Yep, some big bug is making his response to the appeals of the gover'ment for all the loose gold in America, Jimmy. But it jest happens his'n ain't loose . . . it's tight . . . and he's flying it into Canada." The fellow burst into ironic laughter.

"I don't see nothing so funny about that," said Caridius' chauffeur.

"I ain't laughin' at that. Naturally millionaires grab what they can. I'm laughin' at my little gal May. She's thirteen year old. Yesterday she sent into Washington a two-and-a-half-dollar gold piece her grandpa give her on her second birthday."

Jimmy echoed a snort of Johnny's laughter, as he sat looking at the planes.

Caridius got out of the cab and went into the station. He glanced about, chose a young man behind the grating writing in a book. He went up and tapped on the iron grille.

"Those planes out there," he asked in an undertone, "are they shipping gold?"

The clerk looked at Caridius, picked up and drew at a cigarette, laid it down and resumed work on the ledger.

The silent rebuff irritated Caridius. He put his face against the grating and said in a low but peremptory voice, "Young man, my name is Caridius. I'm your congressman on my way to Washington. It is part of the government's business to know if anyone is exporting gold out of this country."

The clerk had had American training in business loyalty.

"Brother, if you were Jesus Christ on your way to heaven and in a jitter about the golden gates, you'd have to find somebody with authority to talk. I'm not in a position to tell you anything."

A realization of the strategic value of this hinted information came over Caridius. He went out front again and saw one of the armored trucks returning from the field. He put himself near its path and called out with the authority of a prosperous business man:

"You going back downtown for another load?"

"Yeh."

"What bank this time?"

"Same bank, sir, the Westover."

Caridius stood aside and waved a hand to show that he was through. As he turned toward the station, with vague plans whirling through his head as to what he could do with

his information, he saw Mary Littenham entering the door. The girl turned as if he had touched her; her face brightened, and she came toward him. Caridius wondered swiftly if she knew of her father's operation. They exchanged good wishes for the day, then the girl said:

"Do you think we would better fly together to Washington?"

Caridius looked at her with a pained face.

"Why not?"

She colored slightly.

"It might have some influence on what you may want to do."

Caridius knew she meant the divorce and that their open association together might lessen his chances of obtaining the decree if he were the plaintiff.

"I was looking forward to flying with you."

"Don't you know I was too? That's why I thought of the other."

"There's the bell now."

"I'll go ahead," planned the girl quickly, "you follow on the next plane. I'll be waiting for you in the office."

Her voice and manner of saying this filled Caridius with the most voluptuous anticipations. She moved through the gate, glancing back at him with the tremulous smile and humid eyes of a woman passionately in love.

When she was gone, and the plane had run for its start and lifted itself into the air, Caridius stood thinking that he must arrange for his divorce as quickly as he could. The best thing he could do would be to take the matter to a lawyer and let him start a process which would become automatic. Then, as the airplane dwindled to a point and melted into the sky, his thoughts came back to the Westover bank's exportation of gold. The congressman realized that a very valuable bit of financial information had fallen into his keeping.

He was surprised that the banker would export his bullion in the face of the earnest approval, which he had expressed

on the preceding day, of private individuals placing their gold at the service of the government. In one section of Caridius' mind, this patriotic view seemed not only natural but even obligatory. But in another section of his mind, as he moved about the platform, he wondered if it were too late for other operators to follow Littenham's lead. The congressman's patriotic viewpoint on the first score gradually vanished in his preoccupation on the second.

The difficulty with Caridius was that he had no gold. He thought of applying to the Westover bank, where he had a line of credit, but of course that was outside their usual market operations.

One of the gold planes at the far end of the field took a run, got itself into the air, and headed north. This made Caridius more nervous and impatient than ever. He went over the roster of his acquaintances: Gearing . . . Sawbrey . . . Essary . . . Krauseman . . . he halted on Krauseman, but after a moment passed by the political boss. Then it suddenly struck Caridius that his partner, Sol Myerberg, would know precisely what to do with the information. Sol knew what to do with everything. He was a juggler who could keep any bit of knowledge whirling usefully in the air along with a score of other bits of knowledge. Nothing ever fell to the ground and remained idle during Sol's performance.

Caridius hurried to the public telephones in the station, got his partner on the wire and told him his news.

Myerberg's thick Jewish voice grew excited in the receiver:

"What? You don't mean it? But, my God, it is history repeating itself. We should have known it beforehand! American bankers have always responded to a national money shortage by shipping their gold out of the country."

"Listen," cried Caridius, "I didn't call you up to learn history!"

"No, but it makes me sore to be a fool. . . . Where are you?"

"At the airport, going to Washington."

"Get in a cab and come to the office at once."

"But I am due in Washington in two hours."

"Listen, congressmen go to Washington when they have nothing important to do . . . it's a spare-time job. You come here at once, I must consult you about this. . . . My God, the idea is yours!"

"All right, all right!"

Caridius snapped up the receiver, hurried out of the booth, hesitated a moment, then made for the telegraph desk and sent a message to his secretary in Washington that he was detained on business. He then went outside, hailed a taxi and offered the driver a bonus for fast service.

By a judicious disregard for some of the red lights and luck on others, Caridius reached the Lecksher Building in twenty-four and one half minutes. At the curb the lawmaker tossed the cabby an extra dollar for risking a fine and a number of necks in the rendering of efficient service and hurried to the elevators.

When he reached the fifteenth floor, he found Myerberg's office in a state of militant moral reform. The Estovia youth was standing in the middle of the floor with Dave Meltofsky bawling him out.

"The idea," Meltofsky was saying, "the idea of an office boy, a trusted employee, placed in a position of confidence, taking, removing and feloniously misappropriating the office's postage stamps."

"We've got to get a machine," said Mr. Koch.

"I put 'em on letters," declared the Estovia boy.

"Mr. Koch here saw you take a whole sheet and carry it out of the building. Where were the letters . . . in the street? What do you think Mr. Caridius here, a congressman, will think of an office boy who would stoop to steal postage stamps?"

The Estovia boy swallowed at nothing.

"I put 'em on letters."

Caridius drew out his gold cigarette case and took a cigarette.

"Estovia," he said, really shocked, "I am surprised to hear of you doing such a thing; especially after Mr. Myerberg picked you up on the street and trusted you enough to place you in a position of confidence."

"I think we ought to call an officer," said Koch.

"I do too," echoed Caridius.

Koch winked not lightly but gravely at Caridius and then nodded toward the door.

"Get on out of here, beat it, you're fired," he said to the boy.

"I don't think we ought to encourage petty thievery in the young," said Caridius soberly, closing his cigarette case and returning it to his pocket.

The petty thievery of the Estovia boy was removed from the collective mind of the office by the entrance of a small sleek black-headed man with marcelled hair, who looked at the group and then glanced at himself in a mirror.

"Mr. Canarelli," greeted Meltofsky admiringly, "Mr. Myerberg sent for you. . . . Sol! Sol! Mr. Canarelli is here."

Myerberg came to the door of his private office.

"Joe, you and Mr. Caridius come in here."

An indefinite qualm went over Caridius as he entered Sol's private office with Canarelli, but he thought to himself that politicians had to deal with all classes, and Canarelli, or somebody, had been very helpful to him in re the Committee on Military Affairs.

Myerberg closed the door of his private office behind them.

"I got Mr. Caridius to come here to see you, Joe."

"Yes, that's what Meltofsky was telling me over the wire."

"Now, Joe, I know you have your investment problems . . . Mr. Caridius, Joe is faced with the judicious investment of from around eight or ten thousand dollars a day. . . ."

"Look here," interrupted Canarelli, "I don't want to put out any money on a politician expecting to get it back. When I contribute, I contribute. But I don't want to expect nothing back from politicians, I don't want to lose confidence."

"Wait! My God, hold on," begged the lawyer, "this isn't a political contribution or a regular investment either. It is just a change of where you do your banking from one country to another."

Canarelli looked sharply at his mentor.

"What do I want to change for?"

"You tell him, Mr. Caridius . . . tell him what you saw."

Caridius felt he might have foreseen this when he telephoned Myerberg. He had a vague presentiment that the situation might lead to some unpleasantness, but if gold advanced in value . . . at any rate, here was the position he had been so fidgety to get into at the air station.

"The Westover Trust Company is sending all its gold by air to Canada," stated the politician briefly.

"What for?"

"Why, hell, the country's off the gold standard," ejaculated the lawyer, "the price of gold is going up. . . ."

"But what's the use sending it to Canada?"

"Because the government is going to confiscate everybody's gold. They've made the announcement. They say they are giving a brief time now for everybody to turn in their gold voluntarily. That sounds pretty good, and it does give the big banks a little time to export their gold, which is what they meant."

Canarelli was surprised.

"The government didn't know the bankers would ship their metal out of the country?"

The lawyer waggled his hand.

"Let's skip that. I was telling Caridius here it was historic. They did it during the Civil War. American bankers

always do it. Why, hell, this day of grace was given them so they could do it!"

Mr. Canarelli became nervous.

"I got a bunch of money in the Westover myself. Them boys are shipping my money out of the country and playing for a rise."

"Well, they've got the right to do that. They can put out your money any way they see fit. I asked you to come here to see if you wanted to stick something away in Canada."

"Hell, of course I do. Canada is a good bet anyway for a man in my business."

"Mexico is better for what you have in mind, but as a depository for gold, Canada leads."

"Well, listen," planned Canarelli actively, "hadn't I better get in touch with some airplanes to stand by for the gold?"

"Do that," advised the lawyer; then on second thought added, "Let me handle the airplane end of it, and you talk to the bank."

The racketeer nodded, drew one of the telephones to him, and put in a call for the Westover bank. As they waited for the call to go through Myerberg pointed out to Canarelli how fortunate they were to have as a member of the firm a representative in Congress who kept in close touch with the financial situation. Here Canarelli's telephone tinkled, and the small brunet man began talking:

"Is this the Westover Trust? . . . Let me speak with Mr. Richards . . . Vice President Richards. . . . Mr. Richards, this is Joe talking . . . Joe. . . . I want to draw some money from my account . . . seven hundred and fifty thousand . . . no, cash, not checks . . . no, not bills, I prefer it in coin . . . gold coin . . . what? . . . Why can't I? . . . You'll take it up with the president? . . . Listen, let me talk with the president. . . . Yes, put me on his wire."

Came another wait, during which Canarelli sat with the receiver to his ear and his eyes fixed on Myerberg.

"That's a hell of a note . . . have to talk to the president before I can draw. . . . Hello . . . this is Joe Canarelli talking. I want to draw seven hundred and fifty thousand in gold. . . . What? . . . disturbed state of the currency. . . . Yes, I know it's disturbed, that's why. . . . No, I don't want it in bills, I want it in . . . listen, I'll come over and talk with you, Mr. Littenham. . . . All right, I'll be right over."

He snapped up his receiver, got to his feet and started for the door.

"He said it would be bad faith with the government to pay out gold in the present crisis. I'm going over there and tell him either to let me have gold or give me a cut on what he has already shipped to Canada."

Myerberg became dubious.

"You might mention that in a pinch. I don't believe I'd push it too hard."

"Hell, he can pay me the gold or give me a cut on his shipment to Canada. When a man tells me he will pay me back my money I expect him to do it."

And he went out the door.

Myerberg lifted his brows and pulled at his shaved purplish chin.

"He was the only man I knew," he said explanatorily, "who had money and who would give us a cut in on his profits if he made any."

Caridius said he was afraid Canarelli was late and added that he hoped the racketeer would not press his claims beyond their legitimate scope.

Myerberg shook his head.

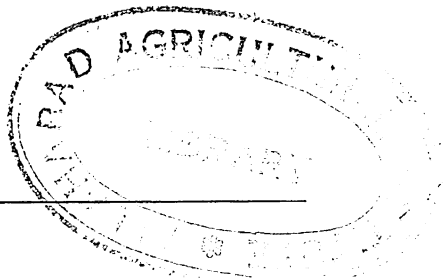
"That's the trouble with Joe, he expects from other men the same absolute unequivocal performance of their word that he gives to them. That's all right among racketeers, but he doesn't understand that in respectable financial circles any contract for future action is contingent on the question which would be the most profitable, fulfillment of the contract or defending a lawsuit."

Caridius took his leave from the office, sorry he had ever brought about the incident. However, the moment he was out on the street on his way to the airport his thoughts returned to Miss Littenham. He felt an impulse to telegraph her the hour he would arrive in Washington, but did not do it. When he reached the airfield once more he heard a news-boy at the station shouting:

"Government orders all gold turned into Treasury! Read about orders for gold to be turned into U.S. Treasury! Fine and imprisonment! Hold out your gold fillings on Uncle Sam and go to jail! Read about gold!"

Caridius went in and bought a paper. A glance at the headlines showed him that the last day for the voluntary deposit of gold in the national banks had expired. It was now illegal to possess gold in America.

30



ON THE PLANE from Megapolis to Washington Caridius thought of the new obligatory character of the government regulations concerning gold, and he wondered if that would settle the controversy that seemed to be arising between his two chief political supporters, the racketeer and the banker. The relations between these two, peaceful or strained, not only could influence Caridius' political career, it might very well involve his private life. The banker's censure might easily alienate Mary Littenham's regard for him. This thought filled the congressman with acute forebodings.

A voice beside him, an unusual voice, quiet and serene, but whose overtones somehow penetrated the drone of the

motors, made the remark that they were now passing the express which had left Washington two hours ahead of their plane.

Caridius then observed a priest was sitting beside him. He followed the father's gaze and saw a train creeping along far below them.

"Our plane does make that seem very old-fashioned, doesn't it?" replied Caridius absently.

"Yes, very soon everybody will be flying through the air, not only the honest, but unfortunately the dishonest also. It will increase the police difficulties immeasurably."

"Yes, I suppose that is true," agreed the politician, following the conversation but not thinking very much about it.

"Then, in the long run," suggested the priest, "air travel will have a tendency to hasten the rule of morals and religion in the world."

Caridius was a little surprised at this turn.

"I'm afraid I don't quite follow that."

"It seems to me that when a people has great freedom of physical movement some sort of moral code must be evolved or the whole social structure will fall into chaos."

"I should say if you give an anti-social man more freedom his crimes would become worse."

"No, he organizes, he begins to establish his own criteria. When the victims of our metropolitan underworld become perfectly helpless they cease to be victims and become subjects. The gangster falls into reciprocal relations with his subjects. Each can depend upon the other. It seems to me here may be the beginning of a more fundamental and uncompromising morality in American life."

"It is accompanied now by murder, blackmail and kidnapping," observed Caridius, not greatly pleased at the cleric's generalizations.

"The mitigation of violence is the root of morality," said the priest. "The idea of sacrifice, the vicarious passion of our Lord, is a great symbol of violence that has been con-

quered by the Christian religion. And just so, the victims of all violence, by their deaths, by their inability to live amid sin, are smaller crucifixions paving the way back to peace and brotherhood."

"That's an odd twist to the usual orthodoxy," observed Caridius.

"Don't you think it gives a very cogent interpretation of such phrases as, 'Blessed are ye that mourn,' 'Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth,' and all four of the gospels repeat over and over that whosoever loseth his life shall find it."

Caridius knew that such beliefs were superstitions long since outmoded, but the priest's words somehow wove an illusion of truth around them. The cleric saw that his companion was impressed at least momentarily, for he fell into a reminiscent mood.

"I have had a number of occasions to repeat that promise in the gospels," he said, and then he went on to tell an incredible story of a girl who had been held by kidnapers but who was released temporarily to come to him for her last confession. She was sold by them finally to the brothels in the Argentine.

The father pointed out that the good faith exhibited in this horrible transaction was the beginning of a dependable American morale.

The priest's anecdote revolted Caridius because he was sure he knew who the girl was. And yet that was the sort of thing that really did happen amid the submerged classes in American cities. His thoughts veered to Mary Littenham. He was glad that she and women like her were lifted far above the brutalities of underworld life. And when he had thought this, he also thought, through the compulsion of loyalty, that he was glad women like his wife Ellora were likewise above the threat of the gangsters.

When Caridius finally entered his suite in the old House office, Mary Littenham arose from her desk and started

toward him, but in the midst of her affectionate approach she hesitated and asked in a low voice:

"Why, Henry, what's the matter?"

"As I flew up here a priest was telling me about an American girl being shipped to the brothels of South America."

She put a hand on his and said tenderly:

"Henry, if I don't worry about how my world is built, you shouldn't worry about yours. Because mine really is—is unbelievable. Take Father, in his ordinary routine, he must . . . what shall I say? . . . displace hundreds of men, while in your world you know of one girl who was shipped to South America."

"Well, your father's operations are more abstract."

"But, dearest, you are not even remotely connected with the girl who was sent to South America. Don't think of it. That's the only way well-placed people can live, by not thinking of the unfortunate."

She pressed his hand, and at the touch a kind of inner force moved him toward her. She avoided him.

"No, listen, Henry, not now, or here in the office, we mustn't start that sort of thing."

"But, Mary, when and where? . . . I thought about you all night long . . . I couldn't sleep for wanting you."

This, of course, was quite untrue, but it seemed to him now that he really had spent a night tossing with desire for this beautiful girl.

"I don't know when. . . . Did you . . . you didn't speak . . ."

"You mean to my wife?"

"Yes."

Caridius drew a long breath and gave the girl an appealing look.

"No . . . no, I didn't. . . . Listen, Mary, when I am with you I don't see how it's possible for me to give Ellora a thought, but when I'm with her . . . I'll be honest with you . . . I just can't make up my mind to go away and

leave her . . . I can't even think of doing it. To speak to her of getting a divorce would be like suggesting a trip to the moon, something that . . . just isn't. But when I'm with you, as I say, it is like breath to a drowning man."

The girl came to a long pause, looking at him.

"Somehow I felt you wouldn't."

"You did?"

"Yes. . . . I suppose that's why I love you. I suppose it's my instinct to bring a strain of kindness and simple good-heartedness into the Littenham circle that makes me love you. And," she added soberly, "I believe it is a preservative instinct. I think a touch of you in a child of mine would cause it to get along more easily and equitably with everybody. I venture you would have had no reason for building a vault under a pond as a protection against the enemies you stirred up."

The notion of having a child by the girl moved Caridius with a breath of the old Greek mythology where mortals were permitted to mate with gods.

"Listen, Mary, I must, I will tell Ellora."

"No . . . no . . . you never will."

"Well, if I don't . . . then what?"

The girl stood looking at him with musing eyes.

"After all, you are you."

"What do you mean?" asked Caridius with a breath of anticipation.

"I mean that while I am a perfectly conventional woman and would certainly prefer the father of my child should have a divorce to leave him free to me, still I'm not superstitious. I wouldn't allow the omission of an old ceremony handed down from our savage ancestors to interfere with a moral purpose. I think that would be shameful."

"You mean you will . . ."

"Yes, I have decided to take an apartment here in Washington. I can tell Father it was inconvenient to come home every——"

"Mary, you wonderful——"

"No, no, no . . . really don't! Henry, God knows it's hard enough to be sensible here in the office with you, without your putting your arms around me . . . anyway, you have to go."

"I have to go?"

"Yes, your committee is meeting."

"What committee?"

"Why, it is the only one you are on so far, darling, Committee on Military Affairs. It is meeting in the new House office. You are supposed to go over there the moment you arrive."

"Well, you've got to kiss me before I go!"

A little later Miss Littenham said unevenly:

"Henry . . . you . . . you are the most prodigal man . . . of my emotions . . . that I ever met."

Caridius set out for his committee meeting thrilled by that foreshadowing of hazardous delight with which a married man anticipates a mistress. He tried to clear up his brain and think about his committee meeting. He knew that girls grew more and more ravishingly beautiful day after day, up until marriage. Ellora had done the very same thing. He focused his mind determinedly on the business to come before the Committee. On committees was where congressmen really served their country. . . . He was profoundly grateful that he might have Mary Littenham without divorcing Ellora, because he couldn't divorce Ellora. The thought of love actually returning in his life filled him with ecstasy. As he passed out of the old House office, he took a cigarette and on a sudden impulse offered his golden cigarette case to the guard.

When Caridius entered the committee room in the new House office building he found the Committee already in session, seated around a table, questioning a soldier.

The soldier, in the uniform of a colonel, with the wings of the air service on his collar, was saying:

"To that I would reply, sir, in my judgment, we should have an air base somewhere near the Great Lakes."

"What would be the object of such a base?"

"The technical military object would be to make our border free from embarrassment."

"You mean in time of war?"

"The Military College, sir, is theoretically, continually at war."

"Where should such an air base be located?"

"In the northern half of Illinois. That would be far enough east to form a unit of our Eastern defences; it would be within nineteen or twenty hours of the west coast, and of course, it would dominate the Great Lakes, their tributaries and their outlet."

A member of the Committee asked if his proposal would violate the treaty between America and Canada that neither should fortify their common boundary.

The colonel said that technically an air base could not be classified as a fortification, that it was an instrument of offence, not of defence, and therefore would not fall under the technical terms of the treaty.

Caridius interposed to ask him if such a construction would not be violating the spirit of the treaty, and whether it would not be better to adhere to the spirit and not to the letter of the American-Canadian compact.

"I was asked the question in my capacity of military adviser. I am answering from a purely military point of view. The political advisability of such a step lies outside of my province and is matter for the consideration of this committee."

The chairman made a sitting bow.

"We thank you, Colonel. . . . The War College has complete plans for such a base."

"Certainly, that's part of its routine work."

"We thank you." He turned to the Committee. "And now, gentlemen, I have an application here from the Rumbourg-Nordensk Munitions and Arms Company suggesting that a certain process of manufacturing gunpowder, now in the possession of the War Department, should be placed at the

disposal of the Rumbourg-Nordensk Company for foreign distribution."

One of the Committee asked if the process were a secret process known only to the War Department. The chairman stated that it was. The questioner then wanted to know why a military secret should be placed in the hands of a private company.

"Mr. Orton of this committee will answer your question," said the chairman. "He is the man who placed the application in my hands."

Mr. Orton did not arise from his chair but gave his reasons informally:

"Gentlemen, it is merely a question of which value of the Saylor-Rose Powder Process this government cares to utilize, its military value or its commercial value. Its military value lies in the future and is less than problematic, it is improbable. Nowadays technological advances are so rapid that it is improbable that this particular process will not be superseded by new methods long before America becomes involved in a war. On the other hand, its commercial value is present, here and now, and is liable to swift decay. So it is a question of which value this committee wishes to utilize, its present or its problematic future value."

One of the Committee asked why the formula should be placed in exactly the hands of the Rumbourg-Nordensk Company.

Mr. Orton, who had presented the application, spread his hands at the simplicity of the question.

"The only possible way for the fruits of American ingenuity to be placed on the world market, Mr. Chairman, is through the instrumentality of our great corporations. Our corporations are, financially speaking, our state. They are the distributors of our national wealth. In time of financial stringency, when our nation wishes to place additional money in circulation, she does it through great loans to our banking and industrial corporations at a nominal per cent. Nothing is more natural therefore than for

our War Department to follow the example of our Treasury Department and place an American invention on the world market through the agency of a great American corporation. In fact, it is the only way it could be done, because the government cannot enter the business of manufacturing and distributing powder itself. Such a course would violate our time-honored American policy of keeping the government of America out of business and leaving the markets of the world open to all her citizens, with equality to all and special favors to none."

At this period polite applause went around the committee table.

"Is the Committee ready to vote on this application?" inquired the chairman.

In the pause the colonel of the air corps said:

"It may be of interest to this committee to know that technically war is not in the future, as some of the members seem to think, it is in the present. Today America is technically at war with every other military force and every possible combination of military forces on the globe. For this committee to expose any secret or advantage which America may possess at any moment is to weaken by so much the present security of our country."

The chairman sat lifting his eyebrows up and down at this. Mr. Orton obtained the floor.

"I would like to hear from our new member, Mr. Caridius, on this point. His view will be fresh, and if I may say it without invidious intent, it will come directly from the people. I yield the floor to Mr. Caridius."

Caridius cleared his throat and arose.

"Gentlemen of the Committee, the representative of the War College at this table has stated very pungently the first alternative Mr. Orton put forward in his speech. He has, you might say, discounted our promissory notes of actual war and has replaced them with the cash of an actual technical war in the present [polite but relieved smiles around the table]. Unhappily our country is engaged in

another war, not a technical military war, but an actual commercial war which rages on every front against every producer in the world. The successful conduct of this war serves as the only foundation for the successful conduct of either technical military war in the present or real war in the future. The question before us is, gentlemen, whether we shall uphold the arms of our soldiers in the factories and furrows who need our assistance now rather than plan assistance to problematic soldiers in trenches who may need our assistance someday. I say this is a case of the ox in the ditch, and we should act accordingly."

Applause greeted Caridius' first attempt, partly out of politeness, and partly because he had repeated Mr. Orton's position fairly well. The application was granted, and some of the Committee were appointed under Mr. Orton to draw up a bill to be presented to Congress.

Caridius returned to his office with quite a sense of well-being. He had not only served one of his constituents, the Rumbourg-Nordensk Munitions Company, but he had advanced the interests of Essary and Rose Saylor, because if the War Department disposed of Essary's invention it would naturally have to pay him for it.

The thought of Rose Saylor and her probable relation with Essary brought a touch of wistfulness to Caridius; then he remembered Mary Littenham and hurried back across the driveway that separates the new from the old office building and in a few minutes was in his own suite again.

31

THE HONORABLE HENRY LEE CARIDIUS lay awake all night trying to decide what was the right and proper thing to do. Like all undesignedly affable persons, the Honorable Henry Lee was a very biddable man. He fell in pleasantly with the suggestions of friends and acquaintances. Now, in his relations with Ellora and Mary Littenham, he gladly and with much relief would have followed their collective advice in the form of custom and morals, but unhappily no such body of information was available in American life.

To obtain a divorce was just as conventional as not to obtain a divorce. The only criterion that could possibly apply was his personal desire in the matter and the happiness of the two women involved. It was purely an individual matter between the three of them. The public not only had no interest in the affair, it had no opinion about it.

The dogma of the Church was not considered in this moral dilemma because, some half century before, the opinion of the Church on a certain biological matter was supposed to have been proved incorrect, and so the influence of that organization had dwindled steadily until now it was altogether negligible, and it never occurred even to the highly suggestible Mr. Caridius to resort to it.

So he stayed awake all night long, wondering what was the right and proper thing to do under the circumstances, when, with a mere modicum of religion, he could have enjoyed a very sound night's sleep.

At about dawn the Honorable Henry Lee made up his mind firmly and unshakably what he would do, and was just falling into a much needed rest, when a faint shrill noise purfled the silence of the dawn. It grew louder and louder and developed into a newsboy's cry. The urchin was screaming:

"War! War! United States Makes War Threat!"

The congressman lifted his head, blinked his eyes at the growing grayness in his windows and thought to himself:

"What? What is that?"

The paper vender repeated his cry much more loudly.

Caridius got out of bed, let himself out of his apartment and went through the empty lobby of the Albemarle to the entrance of the building. The lad was now shouting:

"United States Forced to Break Treaty! Will Fortify Canadian Boundary!"

Caridius bought and rather nervously unfolded the paper. In the first column he saw an account of the meeting of the Committee on Military Affairs. It contained a verbatim report of the army officer's testimony before the Committee and stressed that Upper Illinois would be the logical place for an air base.

For the first time in his life Caridius was angered at a newspaper. It was such an unfair and hazardous thing to do, billboard in the headlines as a practical objective that which the army officer had stated as a purely theoretic objective.

He started back to bed thinking he would now get a wink of sleep when the postman arrived with a sheaf of letters. He glanced through them yawning, still considering bed, when he saw that one of the letters was from his bank.

This irritated him. It could mean only one thing, that he was in the red. His bank never wrote him except when he was overdrawn. Ellora must have been spending money like wild-fire. He recalled the dress she had said she was going to buy, and he wondered just how many dresses she actually had bought.

What a woman she was! Here he was sacrificing his own and Mary Littenham's happiness just to keep her contented, to protect her simple little childish world and—she breaks loose and throws away two or three thousand dollars in a lump!

Caridius was making up his mind in a disgruntled fashion, that he would let the matter go, that a great many wives were far more extravagant than Ellora, when he opened the envelope and drew forth a letter and an enclosure. The letter notified him of the purchase and sale on his account of eight thousand shares of Allegheny Coal and Coke, Inc. The enclosure was a certificate of deposit to his account of six thousand, seven hundred and fifty-two dollars and nineteen cents. As he stared in bewilderment, Caridius then saw that the letter was not from his own bank at all, it was from the Westover Trust Company.

The notification from the Westover took the place of sleep and put Caridius in an excellent mood. The maid came, served him his breakfast, and somewhat later, by way of an outlet for his good spirits, he started walking downtown to his office.

On the way he stopped at a foreign newspaper stand just to see what display the out-of-the-state journals had given the Committee on Military Affairs. The whole board was a broadside of scareheads. "America Forestalls Air Aggression," "United States Arms Against Canada," and so on and on, ringing the changes under a score of heads.

The recklessness of the American press in jeopardizing the friendship of her closest and most sympathetic neighbor astonished and disturbed Caridius. He wondered if there were not some way to broadcast the entirely friendly intent of the Committee's session. As he stood pondering this, he heard his name called behind him. He turned and saw a somewhat disheveled, palish-looking man with a saggy body sitting in a car at the curb.

"You are Mr. Caridius?" repeated the man, as if not quite certain of the politician's identity. "I'm Lennett Wales of

the *Tribune* . . . quite a spread, isn't it?" he wagged a finger from his steering wheel at the board.

Mr. Wales was exactly the man Caridius wanted to see, so he turned himself loose.

"I think that is one of the damndest, most uncalled for journalistic faux pas I ever heard of. It doesn't mention that the idea was technical military strategy and has no more relation to any overt act against Canada than it has against Terra del Fuego."

Mr. Wales drew out a cigarette box and offered it.

"The article itself explains all that."

"But everybody will read the headlines, and who will read the article itself?"

"I don't know." He lighted his cigarette. "A tenth of the persons who look at the headlines . . . a twentieth . . . some small per cent."

"What do the papers get out of endangering our national friendships?"

"Circulation . . . a hot scarehead is a circulation builder."

"They are good enemy builders, too," pointed out Caridius tartly. "That sort of stuff isn't good for our Canadian trade . . ."

"Going downtown?" interrupted Mr. Wales.

"As far as the Lecksher Building."

"Climb in, I pass within a block of your office."

When Caridius was in, Mr. Wales drove a few seconds in silence. Presently he began smiling, drawing down the corners of his lips in the disparaging fashion in which newspaper men smile.

"Of course you know, Mr. Caridius, our playing up the air feature of that story was not primarily intended to build up our circulation."

"No, what was its primary intent?"

"To keep the public from observing that little line in the story telling that the War Department had turned over to

the Rumbourg-Nordensk Company a process for making powder."

Caridius straightened somewhat in the speeding car.

"Why, that was the only sensible disposal to make of it."

Mr. Wales waved his cigarette in acknowledgment, and his manner changed almost imperceptibly.

"Certainly, certainly, I know that and you know it, but will the unthinking public . . ."

"It will give employment to American workmen and bring foreign funds to this country."

"Exactly, but if the people should get a wrong idea that the War Department was giving away military secrets for private exploitation . . ."

"It isn't private exploitation . . . it is only quasi-private. The only way employment can get to the American people is through these big semi-public corporations."

"Certainly, we both know that, but the American public does not yet understand how very 'semi' and 'quasi' its corporations are. It looks upon them as an organization of wealthy men bent on putting America in their pockets. Now if it learns the War Department is handing military secrets to the corporations, why, as I say, the public is too unthinking to grasp the fine points of the matter, and it wouldn't like it. That is the reason of the scareheads."

Caridius now saw his position and observed more mildly:

"I don't think we ought to risk offending Canada just for that reason."

"Well, there's another reason too," observed Mr. Wales aloofly.

Caridius looked at him.

"Yes . . . what's that?"

"Well, if we should really offend Canada and disturb our ancient friendly relations, both nations might start building a line of forts along the border. In that instance it is almost a certainty that the Rumbourg-Nordensk would get the contracts for all the forts built by both countries, because the Rumbourg Company has a reciprocal agreement with the

British and French companies to keep out of each other's territories. The nations might break their treaty, but the munitions companies wouldn't break theirs. You see the editors of the *Tribune* bore all that in mind because their journal and the munitions company both belong to the Littenham interests."

Mr. Wales resumed his ironic smiling and piloted his car to the curb.

"I believe this is your office building. I hope I may have this pleasure again."

Caridius thanked the man and started into the office building thinking a little wryly of connection between newspapers, international peace and the manufacture of munitions, when all this was brushed from his mind by the sight of a woman he knew entering the Lecksher Building just ahead of him. He hurried up, overtook her and said:

"Why, Miss Saylor, you are out early this morning . . . how is Jim Essary?"

"He is all right . . . or at least he was when I left him."

The way she said this disturbed Caridius.

"Why . . . what's wrong with Jim?"

"Two things. Some men came around and wanted Jim to pay them a fee or rent or something to join an association to protect our laboratory."

"Protect it?"

"Yes, they said they would protect it for six dollars a month. Jim wouldn't pay it, so they broke out our window lights and said they would show Jim why he needed protection."

Miss Saylor was very angry; her face whitened as she spoke of the outrage.

"Come on up to the office," said Caridius in a grave voice, "I believe Myerberg can arrange that for you."

Caridius was shocked that the Canarelli gang should ascend so high in the social scale as this girl and Essary. It seemed normal for the racketeers to levy blackmail on poulterers and green grocerymen and the dock companies, but

for them to hold up an old college mate gave the politician an unsafe feeling.

"I believe you said you had two troubles. What was the other?" inquired Caridius as they entered the elevator.

"I'll tell you that in the office," said the girl in a quieter but somehow a more disturbed voice.

The politician said no more but rode up with Miss Saylor in silence. He felt a kind of sympathy for this young woman who was the mistress of his old college mate. It seemed to him that Essary should marry her. Surely no former marriage held him back. If so, why didn't he get a divorce and treat such a sensible upstanding girl properly? The fact that Rose was living with Essary outside the old conventions, if inside the new, piqued his interest in the girl and somehow made him feel very tender and protective toward her. Then a slight feeling of compunction came over him as he questioned whether his thoughts were altogether loyal to Mary Littenham.

32

IN SOL MYERBERG's office on the fifteenth floor of the Lecksher Building Caridius explained to his partner the sabotage Jim Essary had suffered from the Canarelli racketeers.

The short powerful lawyer surprised his companions by ejaculating with much satisfaction:

"That's fine, that's excellent! If I had known the Canarelli gang had broken out your windows I would have sent for you myself, Miss Saylor."

"What do you mean?" inquired Caridius.

"I was on my way to a conference to see about this business. Miss Saylor's case is one of hundreds. The whole munitions district is involved. There have been complaints to police and the newspapers and the munitions company, but of course nothing has been done."

"Where is your conference?"

"At Krauseman's. Incidentally I can let Canarelli know that Miss Saylor and Essary are clients of mine and he will drop their laboratory out of his retaliatory campaign."

"Who will be at the conference?"

"Krauseman, Canarelli and a Mr. Corley representing the Rumbourg-Nordensk Company."

Miss Saylor became attentive.

"You say a Mr. Corley will be there from the Rumbourg Company?"

"That is correct . . . why?"

"I believe the company sent a man to see me . . . he wouldn't say who sent him, but I believe it was the company . . . that was the real thing I came here to see you about."

"Was he a Mr. Corley?"

"No, he wouldn't tell me his name either."

"Well, what did he want?"

"He wanted to buy my rights in the powder manufacturing process Mr. Essary had invented."

"What did he offer you?"

"A thousand dollars."

"A what?" ejaculated Caridius, amazed.

"That's right, a thousand dollars," repeated the girl in a disturbed voice. "He said he represented a large corporation which meant to use my formula which was in the possession of the War Department registered in my name. He said he would give me a thousand dollars for a waiver of my rights in the invention."

Caridius was outraged.

"A thousand dollars . . . why, that's the coolest bit of insolence I ever heard of!"

"That is not infrequent," put in Myerberg. "Corpora-

tions sometimes blackmail small inventors with threats of endless lawsuits and an offer of a nominal price. . . . What did you say to him, Miss Saylor?"

"I told him to see my lawyer."

"That was right," approved Caridius.

"By the bye," put in Myerberg anxiously, "where did you see this man . . . not at the laboratory, I hope."

"Oh no, I thought of that. I knew he would know at once the process had been invented by Jim. . . . No, I have a cousin in North Park. I gave him her address and saw him there."

The lawyer nodded.

"You have an excellent head, Miss Saylor."

As the three sat talking Myerberg pointed out the advisability of accepting whatever figure he could screw the man up to because if the matter ever came before the courts, it would be almost impossible to conceal the actual inventor of the process. And if it became known that Essary was the inventor, the whole process would automatically become the property of the Rumbourg corporation and they would receive nothing at all.

When they decided on this rather hopeless program, the three set out for the conference at Krauseman's.

In the taxi Myerberg was nervous. He sat frowning at the traffic which flowed past their machine. Caridius glanced now and then at the comely young woman who sat between him and the lawyer. Then, somewhat in explanation of the interest and sympathy which he felt for her, he said it was shameful for a girl of Miss Saylor's standing to be annoyed by racketeers.

"That will soon be over with," put in Myerberg. "What disturbs me is for Canarelli and his gang to try to hold up big business. It is safe enough to blackmail the middle-class man: he is unorganized, has little political influence and doesn't own the press, but big business has all of those things. And by the same token it is dangerous for big business to appropriate the booty of the racketeers. Those two directing

forces of American life should learn respect for each other's power."

"You talk as if you approve of gangsters," said Miss Saylor, giving the lawyer an odd look.

"I neither approve nor disapprove. I simply see the fact that here in America we have a new class making a bid for power. At present it is what we call the criminal class, but you must remember that nearly every great American plutocrat and great American corporation began their existences as simple criminals. Of course, after the successful issue of their undertakings they arranged the law so that they are no longer criminals. For example, it was quite legal for Merritt Littenham to vote himself a million-dollar bonus out of the Westover Trust Company. But he should not have taken the money from a depositor who is able to defend himself. That's what this conference is about."

Myerberg might have gone more deeply into the history of the great American fortunes, but here their taxi entered the park of reset flowers which Krauseman, at the expense of the city, kept before his door in perpetual bloom.

A little later the trio entered Krauseman's door and were met by his maid California. The lawyer asked if they were expected. The colored woman nodded and said that Mr. Canarelli and that other man were already there. She led them into a rather dark hallway where stood a complete suit of plate armor with a sword in its right gauntlet. She tapped on an inner door and called through it that Mr. Myerberg had come. Krauseman's thick voice called back to show him in.

The group entered, and Caridius saw three men in the room. There came a pause among these men, then Canarelli began speaking again:

"I telephoned the Westover bank for this gold in the morning, Mr. Corley. . . ."

At the name "Corley" a touch of apprehension came over Caridius that Miss Saylor should meet Mr. Corley again in this place.

Corley himself made a gesture with the white capable hand of an executive.

"But, Mr. Canarelli, the munitions company has nothing to do with the Westover Trust Company. That is a completely disconnected organization."

The small black-haired racketeer leaned toward the munitions official.

"You have nothing to do with the bank?"

"No, my interest lies in the houses furnished by the munitions company to its workers."

"Then there's no use wasting time on you," stated the racketeer curtly. "I want to see the man who runs both rackets."

Corley cleared his throat at the term.

"There is no such man. There is no connection between the Westover bank and our plant."

"That's a fact, Joe," corroborated Krauseman in his thick voice.

Canarelli smoothed his hair.

"Then why did you come to see me? If your mob can't get what I want out of the bank there is nothing I can do for you, Mr. Corley. You are the one who wants something out of me. You have nothing to trade for it. You didn't expect to beg me out of collecting the dues of my Munitions Property Owners' Protective Association, did you?"

Mr. Corley made an exasperated gesture.

"Even if the munitions company could swing the bank, which it can't, the bank could not deliver gold on your deposits, that's illegal now."

Canarelli turned to Krauseman.

"I should have been notified in time to ship out my gold when Littenham shipped out his. I am as patriotic as Littenham, Mr. Krauseman, you know that. I contributed sixty thousand dollars to the Republican campaign fund and seventy thousand to the Democratic campaign fund. I am as patriotic as Littenham. If I had been notified in time all this wouldn't have come up."

"Listen," protested Corley, "what is past is past. You can't use yesterday again. How much do you want today to stop your men from annoying our munitions employees in their homes?"

The racketeer was just as realistic as the banker.

"I want the Westover Trust Company to transfer to my account in the Montreal Bank five hundred thousand dollars of the gold it shipped to Canada."

"But I beg of you, listen," cried the munitions executive in desperation, "the gold deposited in Montreal doesn't even belong to the Westover Trust any longer. It is in the possession of a holding company formed inside the bank but which has absolutely no legal connection with the bank. It isn't in any way responsible for the banks' debts, contracts, obligations or defaults. Even the bank itself could not pay your deposit with gold held by a foreign corporation."

Canarelli smiled briefly.

"You can do nothing?"

"Absolutely nothing."

"The bank can do nothing?"

"Nothing at all."

"Nor the munitions company?"

"Nor that either."

"All right . . . listen . . . you can do something for me."

"What?"

"Carry a message."

Mr. Corley hesitated a moment.

"To whom?"

"To the man who starts at the munitions plant, runs through the bank to the holding company in Canada, to that man."

"Why, there isn't any one particular man."

"That is true, Joe," interposed Myerberg sympathetically. "Corporate law, which was originally intended to avoid the stockholders' personal responsibility for debt, has

been extended by implication to avoid his personal responsibility for theft."

Canarelli continued in a taut voice as if he had not heard this.

"You tell that man for me that I am not his collecting agent. You tell him that all the little men here in town, like grocerymen and butchers and lawyers and doctors, that they are all his collecting agents but I am not." The racketeer got up, walked over and tapped Mr. Corley's shoulder with an odd venefic air. "Tell him when I give him a dollar to hold for me I expect him to hand it back to me when I want it."

A queer speculation flickered through Caridius' head if the harsh banking laws of China had not originally an easy-going American beginning, but were stiffened and made dependable by the Chinese brigands.

Mr. Corley himself arose hastily from his chair. He was a well-built, carefully tailored middle-sized man.

"I am sure there is no such man to tell," he repeated, nervously looking down on the small black-haired racketeer, "and I certainly have no personal connection with the matter, none whatever."

"You work for the munitions company, don't you?" asked Canarelli, looking at him intently.

"I am a vice president."

Canarelli nodded and moved toward the door.

"All right, you tell him what I said."

When Canarelli was gone, Krauseman and his four guests remained standing for a moment before the open fireplace.

"It's a pity he can't get his cut of the gold already in Canada," observed the old German. "It's exactly what he wants and where he wants it."

"Why exactly there?" inquired Mr. Corley with a little shake of his shoulders.

"Because the value of a gold dollar doesn't fluctuate, and there is never any telling when Joe will have to go to Canada."

"There is absolutely no way for a holding company in Canada to pay a racketeer to stop annoying a munitions company in America," said Mr. Corley, drawing a long breath.

"People call me a political boss," said Mr. Krauseman soberly, "but I have never done anything more than act as go-between for the financial interests on one hand and the criminal interests on the other."

"Isn't that a rather tragic position to occupy, Mr. Krauseman?" inquired Miss Saylor.

"It's a responsible position to occupy. I am preserving the form of a democratic government, Miss Saylor, which the people of America can take and use for national ends at any time they see fit."

Myerberg smiled.

"I see you are the keeper of the Holy Grail . . . but in the meantime you collect pay for its storage."

"I doubt if a Protestant or a Catholic would have said such a thing as that," observed the old German gravely.

He preceded his guests through the dark hallway past the suit of empty armor bearing the sword and bowed them out his door.

In the park the three stood and inquired where each one was going after the manner of persons about to take a cab.

"I go to the Lecksher Building," said Mr. Corley. "I was to see Miss Saylor's attorney about making a cash settlement for her rights in the powder process now held by the War Department."

"Why, that's fine!" ejaculated Myerberg, "we are all going to the same place. . . . Do you and Miss Saylor know each other?"

"I met her at her home in North Park."

"Well, this is a fortunate coincidence," observed Myerberg with obvious pleasure. "Miss Saylor came along with me to this place because I knew that I would meet an officer from the munitions plant." He smiled a little self-consciously. "To tell you the truth, we hoped to get a line on the real value of the process from that officer. We didn't

dream that it would be the same man who would come to us to make the final settlement of its value."

Mr. Corley smiled.

"No, I imagine it was a surprise myself."

The taxicab arrived, and the three entered.

"Well now, Mr. Corley," began Myerberg when they were comfortably seated, "what is your idea of the value of the process to your corporation?"

"To tell you the truth, Mr. Myerberg," returned Corley, "the attorneys for the munitions corporation have raised the question whether or not our company really requires the title of Miss Saylor's process." He turned to Caridius after the manner of a man accustomed to speaking before a board and arguing with everybody in sight. "You see the title is now vested in the War Department, but the War Department has transferred its rights of manufacture to our company and——"

Myerberg nodded.

"That was the very point I intended to make myself. Why should not your company go ahead and let Miss Saylor collect the value of the process from the War Department itself?"

"That's a good idea," nodded Mr. Corley.

"Then, in order to clear the record, suppose you simply sign a waiver of the munitions company's rights in the process."

"Well, I could hardly do that, Mr. Myerberg."

"Why not?"

"Because I, a single officer, couldn't bind the corporation. I act in a purely impersonal and representative capacity, and I can decide upon nothing myself."

"But you came here to make this settlement?"

"My power was limited to making you a cash offer, nothing more than that."

Later the taxicab deposited Myerberg, Miss Saylor and Caridius at the Lecksher Building and bore Mr. Corley back to the munitions plant.

33

ON THE SIDEWALK before the Lecksher Building, Rose Saylor stood looking at her two companions with dismay in her eyes.

"What made him leave us like that? . . . Do you suppose he suspects that I——"

Myerberg nodded.

"Evidently. . . . Wasn't that a coincidence, the very man who was to see Canarelli was to see you about the powder process? . . . I never did get to tell Joe to keep his men off your laboratory."

"And he didn't make us any offer at all," bemoaned Miss Saylor.

"Come on up in the office and let's talk it over," invited Myerberg.

"No, I'm going home. I told Jim we would never get any benefit out of his invention. . . . O-oh. . . . Good-bye, I must go."

"Good-bye," called Myerberg cheerfully. "Never despair about a lawsuit. We may be able to beat the company's claim to Jim's process if it really comes up in court."

"Here, Miss Saylor, I'm going to the airfield, I'll give you a lift," offered Caridius.

"But I don't go in your direction."

"Possibly not, but I go in yours." He waved a hand after Myerberg and began looking for another cab.

The woman probably felt the gallantry of his protection.

"I hate to have you go so far out of your way."

Caridius whistled and waved.

"Here, here, taxi . . . right in here!"

As they climbed in he said:

"Imagine such luck . . . very same man . . . well, anyway, don't worry about that. I think really the company would have found it out sooner or later . . . you know, that it was Jim's invention."

"Yes, but we would have got at least two thousand dollars."

Caridius considered his companion carefully.

"Were you and Jim counting on—on the two thousand very much?"

The consideration in his manner caused the girl to hesitate.

"Why-y . . . no-o . . . not particularly."

Caridius was surprised. He straightened somewhat to look at his companion.

"Why you were!" he ejaculated.

"No . . . no, really."

Caridius touched her hand impulsively.

"Listen, Miss Saylor, you can be frank with me. . . . Jim and I were students together in college. I know the kind of persistent painstaking worker he is . . . and reticent, never pushing himself forward. . . . I have always looked upon men who devote themselves to scientific research as persons who have an especial claim upon mankind. They have, they are the engineers of all of our progress, and the rest of us are just passengers being carried along. . . ."

"That's what I always felt about Jim, too," said the girl.

"So now tell me, really, what is his position?" pressed Caridius.

After a little further hesitation she explained:

"He's not working full time in the main laboratory now . . . only four days a week. But he is not allowed to write scientific articles for the magazines . . . of course the

company is afraid he will give something away . . . he can't give lectures for the same reason, although he has been asked to speak at a lot of places and was offered a contract by an entertainment bureau to give scientific lectures. And he can't grow a mustache——"

"What?" interrupted Caridius.

"He can't grow a mustache," repeated the girl with a faint smile. "The superintendent of the laboratory said the company wouldn't want all its research men wearing mustaches, and that while one mustache wouldn't make any difference, it would set a precedent."

Caridius laughed so heartily at this that the girl began to smile too, but she added:

"It made me angry enough at the time."

"I imagine it did at that," agreed the politician with a feeling of having established a very agreeable camaraderie with his companion.

The cab was now entering the housing district of the munitions plant. A sudden very benevolent impulse toward the girl caused Caridius to say:

"Look here, Miss Saylor, I am going to tell you a rather odd thing, if you will be good enough to say nothing about it."

The young woman opened her eyes.

"Yes . . . what is it?"

"Well, Jim's invention has caused me to realize some money."

"Jim's invention?"

"Yes."

"How could it have done that?"

"I'm sorry, but I can't go into that . . . it simply has."

"Ye-es? . . ."

"And since I've been sitting here, it just struck me that if it hadn't been for my firm's faux pas you would have got your thousand dollars out of Mr. Corley."

"How did your firm do it?"

"Myerberg ought never to have invited you to go to

Krauseman's with him. If he had kept you in the office as he should have done, you and Jim would have got something out of his invention."

"Why, he didn't know what would happen."

"That's a lawyer's job, to foresee what will happen, that's why you hire one," pronounced Caridius virtuously.

"Well . . ." said the girl, a little at sea . . . "suppose he did?"

"If my firm lost it for him, I was just wondering whether or not it would be proper for me to replace it."

Miss Saylor stared in amazement.

"You replace it?"

"Yes . . . especially, as I say, his invention has netted me a great deal more than a thousand dollars."

"Why, I couldn't take a thousand dollars from you for Jim!" gasped the girl.

"Now wait," counseled Caridius, patting her hand again. "You are the only way I could possibly offer it to him. He has made the money for me. I have lost it for him. If you feel you just can't take him a part of——" He broke off and explained impulsively, "You see, Miss Saylor, it's political money."

"Oh!"

"And political money is not the receipted, accounted-for medium of exchange such as we find in banks and counting houses. Very seldom is any audit ever made of political money. It is like the Christian faith, it moves about, silently, unobserved; the invisible reward of intangible loyalties; the unmentioned proof of things not seen. Since it is such a commonplace in politics, I see no reason for Jim Essary refusing to accept part of something he has thrown into my hands."

While Caridius was making this rather droll speech he drew forth his checkbook and wrote out a check to James Essary for a thousand dollars. He handed it to Rose.

"Now, give this to Jim and tell him what I said. He doesn't have to keep it, but tell him it belongs to him whether he keeps it or not."

The girl took it very slowly and looked at it curiously. Her eyes became misty.

"He really does need it awfully bad," she said in a low voice.

Caridius felt an impulse to put his arms around her and comfort her in her obvious emotion. And still he believed he was making this generous gesture toward an old college friend. He really believed this.

And Rose Saylor also let it go at that.

34

WHEN THE Honorable Henry Lee Caridius delivered Rose Saylor at Jim Essary's private laboratory he made his adieus to the young woman who possessed his thousand dollars and then motored away with a nervous feeling of incompleteness, of aimlessness, of being at odd ends with the day. He told his cabman to drive on anywhere . . . simply to drive on. The fellow started slowly through the monotonous repetition of identical houses in the munitions section of the city. Presently, with a cabman's amenity, he turned and asked:

"If you just want a ride, shan't I take you to some prettier place than this, sir?"

The suggestion of beauty appealed to Caridius. He wished he could have taken Rose Saylor for a drive among the spring garnishings of the countryside. He felt an impulse to go back and ask her if she would like to go, but the impulse simply passed through his mind and faded out under

his feeling of its unconventionality. If he only had thought and asked her to drive with him before he let her out of the cab, but he didn't know then that he would feel so. . . . As this dialectic moved across the surface of his thoughts he leaned forward and answered the cabman mechanically:

"Do you know how to get from here to Pine Manor?"

"Yes sir, I can swing east, hit the Clear Creek road, and that'll take us there, sir."

"All right . . . do that."

Caridius leaned back in his seat as the chauffeur sped up under the stimulus of a definite destination.

The odd state of his nerves brought a faint feeling of revulsion to Caridius at his continual movement from place to place. He was perpetually in motion: airplanes, trains, taxicabs; perpetually busy to what end? Presumably as a politician he was arranging the country so people could live in it more happily, but nobody lived happily and nobody would live happily; these uninviting identical houses were the sort of thing he promoted. A few minutes later his thoughts were given a better turn when his cab passed out of the purlieus of the munitions plant and entered the Clear Creek road.

Here kept parks eased his feelings of meaningless transition and produced in its stead an illusion of stability. Spaced along the boulevard, clouds of white and pink dogwood, fountains of yellow forsythia gave him an impression as if he were sitting motionless and that a single beautiful scene were looking upon him with an ever changing smile. Under the influence of the panorama he now thought of the check he had given Rose Saylor, simply as a lovely act, but at the same time he began calculating in his mind to see how much he had left from the Westover windfall. Then his musings shifted and he began pondering what reasons he would give Mary Littenham for coming to her home unannounced like this. He could, of course, stir up some office reason, but he had made no selection when his motor reached the high brick wall that bounded the Littenham estate. His car paralleled it for something better than a mile, then turned into the

large ornamental entrance bearing the sign, "Private—Keep Out."

As it fell out Caridius needed no excuse for visiting Pine Manor. When he drove up to the mansion Mary Littenham emerged from the perennial group on the terrace and came down to the taxicab with outstretched hands.

"How nice of you to come out . . . but you couldn't have stayed in town on a day like this. . . . Come up and let me introduce you to my friends." On the terrace she directed Carl to pour a cocktail, then, "Sarah, this is Mr. Caridius, the man I am working for in Washington."

"I hope you get him. . . . How do you do, Mr. Caridius." She smiled at Caridius and then turned to pursue her own conversation, "Earl, that's a French idea of yours."

"Naturally it would originate with the French," laughed Earl.

"Wouldn't it though?" echoed a third voice.

"No matter what its nationality, the admiration and attraction of women other than a man's wife is what makes any genuine sex life possible, inside . . . inside, mark you, not outside . . . the marriage relation."

"And the attraction of men other than one's husband," put in a woman's voice.

"Sex is understood to be divided into two hostile camps," agreed Earl.

"According to your idea, Earl," called a man, "marriage is just like Wall Street: it runs on bills of credit."

Earl shifted to intense seriousness after the fashion of cocktails.

"It simply goes to show that the erotic demands the same variety of stimuli as the æsthetic. It should be recognized as a branch of the æsthetic and cultivated as a college discipline."

"I understand it is . . . informally," called a girl's voice. Earl straightened himself unsteadily.

"Listen to that! That's right, try to be funny. . . . Ladies and gentlemen, it seems we have reached an era in

American morals where our original Puritanic inhibitions have been degraded to a giggle. . . . I ask you, is that nice?"

To Caridius the talk on the terrace always produced an impression of persons who thought only play thoughts, just as they exerted their bodies over nothing but play games. And there was always something relaxed about them, like men and women who have just finished the act of love. Mary Littenham perhaps understood the politician's feeling, for she took his arm.

"Let's desert these folks," she suggested. She directed Carl to loose Rajah from his kennel and then led the way into the pines, following a path toward the distant Greek colonnade.

"Why did you come out this morning?" she asked frankly. "I'm awfully glad to see you."

"Well, I wanted to see you, too," began Caridius, then it struck him that with Mary Littenham he could indulge the luxury of saying what he thought, so he added, "I taxied out of town with another woman, and when I had delivered her at her home, I felt restless, so I came on out here."

The girl walked on in silence for several moments, until Caridius had a fear that his hostess was no better pleased at the mention of another woman than Ellora, his wife, would have been. The dog Rajah came loping through the russet-boled pines and joined his mistress with a detached dignity.

"You rather liked the woman you motored out with, didn't you?"

"Why, naturally," agreed Caridius, wondering if this too were jealousy.

"I mean she appealed to you in . . . a particular way?"

"Well, I'll tell you what I did." Caridius felt an impulse to take this girl inside of his brain.

"Yes."

"I gave her a check for a thousand dollars."

Miss Littenham looked at him interrogatively.

"Did you really?"

"Well, not really to her. She has a friend, an old college mate of mine, who is not doing very well, though he deserved to do well, God knows. He caused me to receive a considerable amount of money, so I sent him a check by her."

"You thought of doing that after you had ridden with the girl in a taxi."

"Yes, I did."

"And then you drove away from her, and . . . out of restlessness came here?"

"That's right again," agreed Caridius a little surprised. Miss Littenham smiled.

"I think you would better say you gave the girl a thousand dollars to be delivered to her through your college friend."

"Why, I don't understand that!"

"That part is simple enough," assured the girl, still smiling, with a faint color rising in her cheeks, "and you wanting to come on out here when you left her, that is really a very sincere compliment to me."

"Of course I wanted to see you. I felt at loose ends with myself, so I wanted to see you."

Miss Littenham put both hands on his arm and gave it a little squeeze.

"You are a dear fellow, Henry, utterly unspoiled by subtlety."

"That isn't such a compliment."

She walked along in silence, smiling faintly, with her eyes following the grace of her great spotted dog.

"Look here, what are you thinking about me?" asked Caridius playfully, but nevertheless he wanted to know because he was not altogether at his ease.

"May I tell you a whimsical idea Dr. Snell once told me?"

"Well . . . yes," agreed Caridius, who had somehow grown not to care a great deal for Dr. Snell.

"He said the gallantries men paid women when they had no hope or even intention of possessing them were probably

... in the last analysis ... a kind of mental procreation."

"Why, what did he mean?"

"Applying it to your adventure——"

"Now, Mary, it wasn't an adventure."

"Applying it to your adventure, because it seems to me it was a very lovely one, you were trying to impress your image on that woman's heart. But whatever is deeply engraved in a woman's mind becomes part of her. If she should ever bear a child, that impression would mold it in some faint degree. So your gallantry, your effort to impress yourself deeply upon the girl was an act of spiritual reproduction. It is really a very interesting and hopeful theory, when you think of it ... the possibility of a child receiving a great number of prenatal inheritances which especially attract the mother added to the particular qualities of the man she loves and to whom she gives herself."

"That's the most fantastic theory I ever heard of."

"It's a reason why gallantry and courtesy and the love of pleasing should have developed in the human race, because gallant and courteous men broadcast themselves ... like fishes. The disagreeable man was simply choked out in the rank growth of their spiritual sperm."

Caridius began laughing.

"Snell must have been a very humorous man."

"Oh, very. He said our profoundest human impulse was reproduction. He explained our endless American divorces as an unconscious racial effort toward reproduction by reassorting childless couples during an age which consciously aimed at simple pleasure through birth control and sterility. That is why couples take spouses, have no children, divorce and take other spouses and have no children, and so on ... it is the conflict between the conscious and the unconscious. Divorces, he said, were like the irrepressible writhings of the suicide who has hanged himself."

"Mm-mm, I see Dr. Snell was a very humorous man indeed," nodded Caridius in serious sympathetic irony.

As they talked, their arms fell about each other's waists and they moved slowly along the path to the Greek peristyle.

"Mary," asked Caridius, drawing a long breath, "what are we finally going to do?"

The girl became serious.

"You haven't said anything further . . . to anyone?"

"No . . . and I know I never will."

"I will fly to Washington in the morning," she planned slowly, "and when I get there . . . I'll look up a place."

"An apartment . . . for yourself?"

She nodded faintly without looking at him.

As they walked Caridius pressed her figure with a faint sweet feeling of weakness coming over him. At the edge of the pinetum they stopped and stood looking at the lily pond. Presently, by tacit consent, they moved on in each other's arms to the entrance of the subaqueous chamber in the peristyle. At the end of the long open vista they could see the yellow towers of Pine Manor. At the movable panel that opened into Merritt Littenham's retreat, the two lovers paused. Caridius glanced at the girl and asked if they should go inside.

"If you want to . . . why shouldn't we?"

He knelt and began fumbling for the movable marble slab. With unsteady hands he found it and slid it open. The dog came up to sniff at the hole.

"Go away, Rajah," ordered the girl, "make him go away, Henry."

"Go on away!" repeated Caridius, entering the aperture.

The great Dane moved a little back and stood looking at the two. Caridius held out his arms to receive the girl. He closed the panel and propped it shut; then the two moved away holding tightly to each other in the green subaqueous light.

At one side of the chamber stood a couch flanked by a table, a cellarette and a bookcase. The lovers reached the couch, sank on it, and sat kissing each other with the interminable sweetness of first givings. The man caressed her

arm, her full bosom, his hand fumbled at a button on her blouse. The girl drew an unsteady breath, lifted her fingers and undid it for him.

A touch of middle-class compunction came over Caridius to think that he would accept a check from Merritt Littenham and then possess his daughter.

"Mary," he said shakily, pressing his cheek to her breast, "if . . . if you have never given yourself . . . to anyone . . . for me to take you like . . . like this . . ."

A shudder went through the girl's form.

"Oh darling, I love you . . . any woman would love you . . . you have the sweetest, most romantic fancies. . . ."

35



WHEN THE Honorable Henry Lee Caridius came home to his pretty wife, Ellora, he kissed her amid the lingering emotional opalescence of Mary Littenham.

"I have been down at the office going over some matters with Sol Myerberg," he explained.

Ellora studied her husband for a moment.

"What sort of matters?"

Caridius related with a breeze of interest what he and Sol had done at Krauseman's.

"I thought you said you were at Sol's office all this time?"

"Well, honey, we did start from there," replied Caridius in a jolly tone.

He was very pleased within himself to think that he would be able to possess Mary Littenham without divorcing Ellora, not only because his wife was a simple little creature who

needed his protection and of whom he was quite fond, but also Ellora and this household were a kind of insurance against him and Mary Littenham slipping into the doldrums of matrimony. As a married man he saw that distinctly.

"Wasn't that extraordinary of Senator Loree, starting an investigation of crime?" observed Ellora.

"Doing what?" ejaculated Caridius.

"Yes, ordered a senatorial committee to investigate crime in the United States; didn't you know that? The afternoon papers were full of it. All the newsboys were yelling it."

"I wonder what Loree means by investigating crime?"

Caridius stood thinking intently of crime and graft and the political organizations of the city. It was a system which began with pure crime, moved up through simple graft into political favoritism, through political clubs, and so to the ordinary man who could go to a friend in a club who would speak to the corner policeman who would permit him to park his car in front of his house all night . . . and there was nothing wrong in that.

In that system which supported Senator Loree himself, and Caridius and Bing and Orton and all the rest of Congress, Senator Loree proposed to start an investigation to show where black left off and white began. Then a solution of the riddle dawned on Caridius:

"I understand it, Ellora, it really means the Littenham interests are retaliating against the racketeers."

"How do you mean?" asked Ellora, still studying her husband.

"Why, a disagreement, a sort of feud, has broken out between the munitions plant and the Westover bank on one side and the Canarelli gang on the other."

"What have they got against each other?"

"The Westover bank officials formed a holding company and shipped the racketeer's gold to Canada and deposited it to their own private account."

"Was that legal?"

"It was at the time. And the bank couldn't really do any-

thing else except ship out its gold. If it did not, the government would debase the currency and confiscate the gold and so cut into the bank's capital. Of course the bank officials couldn't allow anything like that."

"But what made the officials deposit the gold in Canada to their private accounts?"

"Well, it was perfectly legal when the deal went through . . . gold was at parity then. It's been going up since. If a bank president sees a chance to take over half the deposits of his customers, why it would be really strange if he didn't do it. Just what man in America can you think of who wouldn't do it if he had the chance?"

"And how does Canarelli object to that?"

"He had some money in the bank; now he wants a cut on the gold in Canada. He is an outlaw, he is not accustomed to having his money taken from him by big business as the rest of us are. He resents it. He is now trying to collect what he lost in the Westover by holding up the houses around the munitions plant which Littenham owns."

"How does he do it?"

"Blackmail, of course. Why, his gang is trying to blackmail as nice a fellow as Essary. That's going pretty far when——"

"Your friend Essary?"

"Yes, I thought that was going pretty far. Essary belongs to nice people, like ourselves. He's not a groceryman or a poulterer or a ready-to-wear manufacturer, people who normally pay blackmail to racketeers. No, Canarelli has stepped up among professional people. I would like to know where this is going to stop."

"That wasn't in the afternoon papers."

"No, we got it from Essary's wife this morning, she went with us to Krauseman's."

Ellora nodded sharply at her husband.

"Uh-huh. I knew you had been with some woman!"

Caridius then saw that this entire conversation, on his wife's part, had been an angling for the name of the woman

he had seen that day. She had treated him that way hundreds of times before, but he never could remember to stop and think what she was up to.

"Now where did you two go?" asked Ellora with quiet intensity.

"Why, darling, I told you, to Krauseman's," repeated Caridius defensively.

"And after that?"

"You mean where she and I went after that?"

"Yes, I mean where she and I went after that," repeated Ellora with feminine sarcasm.

"Why . . . naturally . . . I took her home in a cab."

"And why did you have to take her home in a cab?"

"Listen, Ellora, I have some consideration about me, I hope."

"Yes, you have a lot . . . especially for some women."

"All right, turn it around the other way. Suppose your home had been held up by racketeers, and suppose Jim Essary should have had business with *you* downtown. You were in a terribly nervous state after your experience and afraid to go back alone. Do you suppose if Jim Essary should fail to escort you home under those circumstances, I would account him a friend or a man of honor?"

"But they are not married!"

"My God, Ellora, what difference does that make?"

"Why, it makes all the difference in the world . . . that's why you went home with her!"

"Ellora! Ellora! What motives you impute to me without a shred of fact to base your——"

"Well, that's the very reason."

"And what if they are not married? Half the couples here in town are not married."

"Why, that's not so!"

"No, of course that's an exaggeration, but lots of them are not."

"Well, that's true, but I don't want my husband seeing home a woman who isn't married to another husband."

"Listen, Ellora, you certainly can't expect people of our prominence to discriminate among their friends as to exactly which couples are married and which are not."

"Well, no-o," admitted Ellora reluctantly, "we couldn't start a crusade like that; we'd make ourselves ridiculous."

"No, we have to take the world as we find it: the evil with the good, the chaff with the wheat. If we keep our own little corner bright and shining and pure, Ellora, we'll be doing a very good part in this world."

His metaphor touched Ellora. It had an ecclesiastical ring which she always accepted as authoritative. She came over and put a hand on his arm.

"Listen, honey," she said in a sad but comforted tone, "if ever you should get tired of me and feel that I am holding you back from the woman you really love, just tell me so, and I'll let you go. I don't want ever to stand between you and your happiness and success, honey, not ever."

She looked up at him earnestly with misty eyes, and she meant every word she said from the depths of her heart . . . at the moment.

From the dining room the maid struck three notes of a gong to announce dinner. The two went in to the table with its flowers and silver and napery. Various musings rose in Caridius and sank again as the meal progressed. Ellora's endless jealousy which up till that day had been without grounds, or at least without physical grounds. Then he reflected that it was fortunate that Ellora suspected Rose Saylor. She would be a kind of shield to protect Mary Lit-tenham. The mere thought of his mistress started his heart beating. He wondered when he would be with her again. Then this changed to compassion and tenderness for Ellora. She looked so small and helpless and somehow lonely, sitting a long distance from him at the end of his table. She was a suspicious, uneasy child left with nobody but him to turn to. And now the essence of him, the real person whom he was, was withdrawn from his child wife by a current which, he told himself, he could neither stop nor control. If he could

be allowed frankly and openly to live with the two women . . . but that was forbidden. The conventional solution was to lop off one segment of a person's emotional life by divorce, or to conceal the second arrangement. This was one convention that was followed faithfully in America. Their world could not endure a man or a woman who frankly admitted into their hearts more loves than one.

"What are you thinking about, Henry?" asked Ellora.

"The Mormons," he replied.

Ellora was shocked.

"Henry, you are not sitting there wishing you were a Mormon!"

"Why no, darling, of course not. Do you imagine I would uphold even mentally, in the privacy of my own thoughts, the degrading custom of polygamy? Why, it is against the law of nature, much less the law of God."

"Then why were you thinking about the Mormons?"

"Why . . . I was just running over the history of my country in my mind and . . . I had got to the Mormons."

"Running over the history in your mind?"

"Yes . . . in Congress, you know . . . we have to bring up historical analogues to support our own bills and attack the bills other members bring up. . . ."

Just here Caridius' power of invention was rescued by a ring at the doorbell. Ellora turned to the maid.

"Go see if it's the laundryman, and if it is tell him to call for his money tomorrow. The idea of a laundryman routing people up from dinner." This was just as irritating to Ellora as the suspicion of her husband's infidelity. She knew no gradations in her irritation and disapproval of things.

The maid returned presently.

"It's Mr. and Mrs. James Essary calling, ma'am," she announced.

Ellora stared, then held up an embarrassed hand at the maid.

"Sh! Not so loud, they're not married!"

Caridius arose and accompanied his wife into the living

room with a touch of apprehension about this unprecedented call of the Essarys. He was so uneasy he forgot to introduce them to his wife.

"Come right in, I'm delighted to see you, Jim, you and Miss Saylor. . . ."

"I haven't had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Essary and Miss Saylor," reminded Ellora sweetly.

"Why no, pardon me, darling. Miss Saylor, this is my wife, and darling, this is Jim Essary . . . I've told you so much about both of them."

"It's Mrs. Jim Essary now," corrected the inventor, smiling.

The Caridiuses came to a blank pause. A kind of vague dismay filled Caridius at the news that the girl to whom he had just given a thousand dollars had immediately married.

"You people haven't gone and got married?" cried Ellora in surprise.

"Yes we have . . . this evening . . . just a few minutes ago," said Rose, smiling.

"Well of all things. . . . How came you to?" Here Ellora was seized with a feeling that her question was not tactful, and she changed it to, "How came you to get married this evening?" As though they were always marrying around at one place or another, and her whole interest centered on why they had chosen this evening.

"Well, we are going away," explained Essary, "we don't know for how long, and to simplify the passports and everything we just married."

"Oh, you are going abroad, how nice!" Caridius wondered in displeasure if they were taking the thousand dollars he had given Rose and were going to squander it idly on a trip to Europe whereas he, the honest, provident hard-working owner of the thousand, had to stay at home.

"Yes," nodded Mrs. Rose soberly, "we are going to Japan."

The Caridiuses were amazed again. Ellora said:

"Why, you people are not so keen about going!"

"No, we are not," admitted Rose gravely.

Caridius caught a glimmer of the reason of their sudden departure and ejaculated:

"On account of Kumata?"

"That's right," nodded Jim Essary, apparently relieved that Caridius had guessed it.

"We let Kumata have the electrical thing that Jim killed mice with," explained Rose. "You saw it, didn't you, Mr. Caridius?"

"Yes, I saw it, I saw him kill a mouse with it."

"What an awful thing!" shivered Ellora.

"Why, it was only a mouse, darling," interposed Caridius.

A grave, almost somber thought dawned on the congressman's mind, but it was censored by his knowledge that his firm would get a commission on the sale of the electrical device to Kumata.

"He wanted me to go with him," explained Essary, "because I am the only person who knows anything about the machine. He says his government will give me every opportunity to set up a practical-sized machine with technicians to help me. In fact, I will be the superintendent of the job."

"That's fine," nodded Caridius, thinking once more about the implication of the sale. "Uh . . . what would be a practical machine?"

"M—m . . . well . . . one large enough to . . . to completely demonstrate . . . uh . . . what it would do."

"Yes . . . well, of course, apart from the money end of the sale, you, as an inventor, would naturally . . . want to see what your machine would do."

"Sure, I knew you would approve of it. Myerberg was tickled to death because I decided to let Kumata have the gadget."

"Uh-huh . . . considering what you went up against with your first invention, nobody can blame you."

"That's what Myerberg said," nodded Essary. "I—I would have liked to develop it over here, for—for ourselves, but . . . with everything so uncertain . . ."

"What are you men talking about?" interrupted Ellora.

"Why, darling, Jim here placed an invention of his with the War Department, and it got around somehow to the munitions company, and so now he's letting go another invention . . . somewhere else."

"He won't get any money out of his first invention?"

"I . . . don't think so."

"Isn't that a shame!"

Another silence filled the room.

"We don't know when we'll get to see you folks again," began Rose.

"When do you start?" asked Caridius.

"Well, I don't think we need stick around any longer for that powder thing," said Essary, "that's gone. We're going to start right away. And . . . and I came around tonight to thank you for . . . for what you sent me today, Henry . . . I . . . brought it back to you . . . I won't need it now. I've got more money than I ever dreamed of owning. I can tell you this after your gesture this afternoon." The inventor was touched. His voice was unsteady under his gratitude. He produced the check from an inner pocket and handed it to Caridius.

"That's completely yours, Jim," said Caridius, withholding his hand.

"If I needed it I'd keep it, but I don't need it. A thousand thanks, just the same, from the bottom of my heart."

Caridius took the check. The Essarys stayed on a little longer, then said they had endless packing to do at the laboratory and took their departure.

Ellora remained silent until the callers were outside the door, then she burst out:

"Henry Caridius, did you give that woman a thousand dollars?"

Caridius stared in amazement.

"The woman . . . what are you talking about?"

"You gave that money to that strumpet of a woman!"

"Darling, didn't you see Jim give it back to me? And here it is, you can see for yourself, Jim's name's on it." He produced the slip of paper.

"But you gave it to her! You meant it for her! Oh! Oh!" She began shrieking.

Caridius put an arm around her.

"Hush! Hush, darling! Don't scream so! My God, I gave the check to Jim . . . there's his name on it! Lula, Lula, bring me the smelling salts out of the bathroom! Darling, please hush! Do you want people to hear you all over the Albemarle?"

36

AT BREAKFAST next morning a paper still damp from the press set before the Honorable Henry Caridius the news of the day. The front page carried an account of the huge naval maneuvers the American fleet was carrying out in the Pacific. As a microscopic part of the background of those maneuvers the congressman thought of Essary and Rose Saylor—Mrs. Essary she was now—and the electrical gadget they were taking to Japan. Still, he couldn't blame Essary for trying to get what he could out of his invention and not allowing it simply to lapse into the hands of the company.

On another page the politician learned of the dust storms in the West; out in the country which the government had plowed up in order to decrease the national food supply to a marketable margin.

The women's clubs were going to hold a national meeting

in Washington. Federal officers had taken over the policing of the housing district around the munitions plant. . . .

Caridius blinked his eyes and looked again at this last news item. Federal officers . . . the housing district of the munitions plant. . . . That would probably cut into Canarelli's new racket unless he could buy off the federal men as he had bought off the state police.

Caridius wondered how the federal officers found authority to step into a purely municipal graft. Merritt Littenham, no doubt, had wangled it somehow.

Thought of the financier, naturally, brought Caridius' mind back to Mary Littenham, from whom it had been diverted momentarily by the headlines. He refolded the paper and laid it by his wife's plate with the comforting thought that the articles in it would not set her mind off on the same train his own had followed. He rose from the table, found his hat, picked up a Malacca cane which he was affecting and went out into the street for a taxi. Half an hour later, when Caridius arrived at the flying field, he glanced about automatically for Mary Littenham.

He had no reason for thinking she would be there. They had agreed not to fly together to Washington as it would be indiscreet for them to be seen so often in each other's company. Nevertheless, when Caridius saw that she really had not come, he felt disappointed and depressed.

He was surprised that Mary should be so persistent in her resolutions, then he wondered if she cared for him as much as he cared for her. They had arranged for him to fly at ten and for her to follow at eleven. If it had been vice versa, he at least would have reached the aviation field in time to wave her off.

Well, anyway, they would see each other within the next two hours and a half. He looked at his watch. At twelve-thirty he would be with her . . . out shopping perhaps for the apartment in Washington which she had planned to rent.

Caridius would probably have gone on thinking of his

mistress in this incoherent fashion until he arrived in Washington, but just here another passenger broke in on the unending round song of his thoughts.

"Look, down the field," ejaculated the fellow in some excitement, "do you see that red airplane with the white-headed boy in it?"

"Well . . . what about it?"

"That's one of the Canarelli gang taking lessons in flying. He's not much more than a boy, and they say he's got all sorts of money. . . . Well, he's buying airplanes, eh?"

Since Caridius knew Canarelli himself he was not greatly interested in his henchmen. However, he did think rather ironically that since Canarelli's gold had been stolen by Littenham the racketeer was arranging an air service of his own for future emergencies.

"Look at him! Look at him!" cried the passenger, following the red plane with his eyes. "Why he's doing the loop! A beginner doing the loop!"

"How do you know he is a beginner?"

"The guard pointed him out to me . . . them racketeers certainly have got their nerve."

"I didn't know they had amateurs taking flying lessons on the field."

"Oh, they don't. He's not taking them here. He just lighted here and took off again. The flying school is somewhere over in the east part of town. I'm sure glad I got to see a genuine racketeer!"

When Caridius finally boarded the Washington plane he was careful not to sit next to this fellow passenger. Nevertheless, he spent part of his journey thinking about him. The man's attitude toward the gangster in the plane was one of the reasons why the underworld flourished. There were millions in America holding this point of view.

The thought seemed to Caridius original and statesman-like, and when he reached Washington he determined to mention it to his secretary.

However when his plane finished its journey and he rode

through the avenues of Washington on his way to the Capitol grounds, the incident of his fellow passenger passed out of his mind. He wondered if Miss Littenham would really take an apartment in the city as she had planned on the preceding day. If she did his whole life would be transfigured, it would be beatified. The thought of waiting another hour in his office before she came and assured him again that she would take the apartment, was more tantalizing than all his recent journey without her. When he reached the old House office and approached his own suite he thought what if Mary would waylay him behind the office door and step out into his arms when he entered? This fancy so grew upon him that his heart beat with a foolish expectation when he did enter his suite. It was empty. Then he remembered that once, during their honeymoon, Ellora had jumped out from behind the door of their apartment and kissed him. The memory brought a sudden revulsion in Caridius' feelings, and he stood in his empty reception room filled with vague self-reproach on account of Ellora.

A telegram had been slipped under his door. He picked it up, still thinking of Ellora, and opened it. It was from Sol Myerberg. It read:

Political business, utmost importance. Return Megapolis immediately. Expect you noon. Myerberg.

Caridius looked at the message with a disturbed face. The idea of returning to Megapolis immediately without seeing Mary Littenham was impossible. He thought of calling Sol up and asking what he wanted, but if he once got Sol over the wire the dynamic Jew would probably get him started back to the city willy-nilly. Then he reflected that there was no political business in which he was so intensely interested, because he already had a seat in Congress. He then thought of some sort of federal-state appropriation, such as a harbor bill. Myerberg wanted him to pull whatever wires he could to land the contract for some friend. That was what Myer-

berg wanted . . . something like that, and there was no sense at all in shuttling back and forth between the two cities like a damn bobbin. . . .

While Caridius thought these strong positive thoughts he moved over to the telephone and dialed four, one, one, for long distance. As he placed the receiver to his ear he saw a note lying conspicuously on top of his typewriter case. He leaned over and got it. With a touch of apprehension he saw it was in Mary Littenham's handwriting. Then she had decided before she left the office the preceding evening that she would not take the apartment and perhaps meant to give up her position in his office.

As these disturbing deductions flashed through his head he opened the envelope with one hand and read:

I came in on the eight o'clock plane this morning to give myself time to look for an apartment. I am going to look along Jay Street for some usual medium-priced inconspicuous place. I am going to try being plain Mary Smith or Brown for a while. The larger hotels would be too public for permanence. I will take a green taxi which ought not to be hard to find on Jay Street if you should need me for any unforeseen work before I get back. . . . Mary.

Caridius read this note with a great wave of relief. In his receiver the words were repeated:

"Long distance! This is long distance!"

"No, sorry, I called up another number."

And Caridius hung up the telephone, hurried out of his office, locked the door and hailed a cab for J Street.

J Street, or, as it is always expanded by Washingtonians for the sake of having an address more solid than a mere letter of the alphabet, Jay Street, is a broad, dirty tree-grown thoroughfare set with the dingiest and most ingeniously unlivable of houses. Their exteriors are of weathered brick or stone, abdominous with bay windows, and topped with little dunce-cap towers on their roofs.

Caridius told his cabman that he was looking for a green cab parked somewhere along this street, and invoked him to keep a sharp lookout on one side while he watched the other. In this fashion they traversed the thoroughfare until progress was cut off by an unbridged railroad cut.

Caridius grumbled that the taximan must have missed it. They exchanged sides to watch, turned around and started back. Presently the cabman saw it parked on his side. Caridius was puzzled.

"I imagine she crossed the street from your old side to your new side as we went up," decided the congressman.

"I imagine it must have been like that, sir," said the driver, striking his meter and letting Caridius out.

The congressman approached a three-storied red-brick house with considerable excitement. He climbed five steps and pulled a brass knocker. Before the echo of his summons died away he heard voices approaching the door. It opened, and Mary Littenham, an old woman with a cloth around her head and a fairly youngish man in an old black dressing gown appeared inside a hall. Miss Littenham began introductions.

"Here is my uncle whom I was telling you about. Mrs. Sebbutts, this is my uncle Mr. Lynch, and this is Mr. Gaz-zoo, Uncle."

"I was just telling your niece you-all won't find a nicer apartment in Washington at nowheres near the price."

"But it has no bath," put in Mary with a worried face, "none of them along this street has any baths. I've looked at dozens."

"Now there you are, miss," nodded the landlady with a touch of satisfaction. "None of 'em in Washington has private baths. They have baths, but they don't have private baths; and the great thing about these three rooms that I showed you is you are next to the bath. Why, the gentleman who vacated it only last week could be asleep, and any of the roomers upstairs could creep out of their beds and try to beat him to it; and the stairs creaking would wake him up

in time for him to hop out of bed and beat them to it. I've heard him do it many a time, haven't you, Mr. Gazzoo?"

"I've not only heard him, I've seen him jump in ahead of me a dozen times," corroborated the gentleman in the black dressing gown.

"So that's why I put the advertisement in the paper, 'semi-private bath,'" explained Mrs. Sebbutts.

"How many roomers do you have in this house?" probed Caridius.

"Twenty-four."

"And you've got just one bath!"

"Well, I don't use it myself. I sleep in the basement and use other arrangements."

"But, good gracious, twenty-four persons . . ."

"Yes, yes, but you-all are gover'ment employees, ain't you?"

"Yes, we are."

"Then it'll work out all right."

"How do you mean . . . work out all right?"

"Why, all the gover'ment offices have staggered hours so as to let their clerks get their baths before they come to work in the morning. Now there's Mr. Gazzoo. He is an engrossing clerk in the Patent Office. He's waiting for his bath now. But he don't have to go to work till forty-five minutes after eleven. So it all works out very nice."

"That's right," nodded Mr. Gazzoo, "you will find that the governmental work here in Washington has been systematized in a very scientific way to meet the shortage of baths."

"Why don't the houses put in more baths?" asked Caridius in astonishment.

"They don't have to," explained the engrossing clerk, "the rooming houses are jammed full now, so why should the landlords go to the extra expense of baths when they wouldn't gain anything by it?"

"Why doesn't the government build proper rooming houses?"

"That would be an invasion of private rights by govern-

mental competition. And the government also finds that it can employ a great many more clerks by dividing up their hours so everybody can get a bath under this system than if everybody had a bath of his own. So you see it all works right in line with the present policy of the government to make jobs for everybody."

This talk would probably have drooled on, growing more and more theoretical had not Mary interrupted it by saying:

"We'll try the place for a month. How much is it for a month?"

Mrs. Sebbutts began calculating mentally.

"Well, it's fifty-seven dollars and a half a week, if you are going to take it by the month I suppose it would be some reduction . . . say fifty-seven dollars a week, that's . . . four times seven are twenty-eight . . . four times five are twenty and carry two . . . two hundred and twenty-eight dollars a month."

"Yes," interrupted Mr. Gazzoo, "the landlords in Washington are just as scientific as the government. They can look at a government worker, tell just how much he draws a month, and mention a rental that will exactly leave him carfare to go to work . . . and him walk one way. . . ."

A splash and the closing of a door upstairs sent Mr. Gazzoo scuttling up the steps, hugging his dressing gown around him. The hour of his bath had struck.

When Caridius and his secretary reëntered the green cab the politician protested the girl renting such an apartment, but she repeated that she always had wanted to see how the people on the street lived. And in the promise of the girl's approaching love, all concern for the apartment vanished from the congressman's mind. They drove back to the House office building through the fragrance of spring, which was sweet even in Washington's dirty streets. The two lovers looked at each other in the green taxicab, held each other's hands, tremulous for at least the privacy of their own suite.

When at last the two entered the old office building the guard at the door called to Caridius and handed him a tele-

gram. The congressman took it and hurried on down the corridor to his own door. He unlocked it, and the two went inside together. He closed the door shakily and as silently as he could, then he and the girl entered each other's arms with the foolish, almost painful ecstasy of lovers who have been separated for close onto twenty-four hours.

"Mary," he whispered incoherently, "you are so sweet . . . like flowers turned into love. . . . I feel as if I hadn't seen you for ages. . . . I wish we had a better apartment."

"Oh, darling, it is so pioneerish. It must be like the colonies when my great-great-grandfather came over here to live . . . no baths . . . no furniture . . . so Early American. . . . We'll love it for a night or two."

"Tonight . . . our wedding night . . . to sleep all night long in each other's arms . . ." They paused and then went on talking amid kisses:

"Do you suppose we'll get tired?"

"Why, darling," protested Caridius, "what an idea!"

"But other people always have, Henry," repeated the girl. "And let's look at it this way, Henry. It can't last. Let us pour ourselves out to each other utterly while we want to. I don't have to depend on you as most women have to depend on men. I shall never try desperately to hold you when you want to go somewhere else, and so, since neither one of us is held . . . maybe we'll just stay together because . . . because we love each other . . . do you suppose that's possible?"

"Sweetheart, darling, it's the other that is impossible . . . for us ever to leave each other. . . . I could not have imagined a woman composed utterly of delight and sweetness——"

In the midst of this unscheduled outbreak of congressional eloquence there came a rattling of the doorknob. Caridius and his secretary jerked apart and got rapidly into as negligent and indifferent postures as their heightened colors and quickened, uneven breathing would allow.

The door opened, and a telegraph messenger entered.

"The sender requests an answer," he announced in a husky voice.

"Yes . . . yes," agreed Caridius, nervously wondering if the boy had observed anything and reflecting that it made no difference if a telegraph boy had observed anything. "Let me see . . ." He opened the envelope.

"Who is it from?" asked Mary, trying to appear casual and indifferent.

"Myerberg . . . he says he sent me two telegrams telling me to come to Megapolis this evening."

"Did he? Where are they?" cried Mary.

"Why, yes . . . here's one in my pocket, there's another one on the table, and I'm reading this one."

"Do you want to send an answer, sir?" repeated the boy. "The sender requested an answer."

"Yes . . . take this answer . . . 'Cannot possibly come to Megapolis tonight. Important legislative business . . . night session of . . .' What will it be of, darling, night session of the Committee or the whole legislature? . . . make it Committee . . . 'important night session of Committee.'"

"But wait, this must be important, Mr. Caridius," cautioned the secretary. "Mr. Myerberg sent three messages. He isn't a man to insist unless he has a very good reason."

"But, darling, you know I can't go tonight . . . with a night session coming on!"

"Yes you can."

"But my legislative duties, Mary!" pleaded the congressman.

"Listen, boy," countermanded the girl, "take this, 'Will arrive in Megapolis on ten o'clock plane. Expect me.' Signed 'Caridius.' We can have dinner here and fly back together in the moonlight. . . . I think there's a moon."

The boy tore up the blank he had begun, threw it into the waste basket and started a new one.

37

THERE WAS, according to Mary Littenham's planning, a moonlit flight among argosies of springtime clouds, and it held an ethereal honeymoon enchantment. But when the two lovers parted from each other at the aviation field in Megapolis and Caridius proceeded to the Lecksher Building the politician's irritation at Sol Myerberg became more and more acute. When finally he confronted his partner in Myerberg's private office he looked at the thick black-haired fellow and ejaculated:

"So, what in the hell were you telegraphing me all over the place about?"

Myerberg reached for him.

"Well, thank God you're here! I got your telegram saying you were coming, but somehow I didn't believe it."

"Why didn't you believe it?"

"It didn't sound like you . . . you didn't write it."

"No, my secretary wrote it."

"Well, since you didn't write it I was afraid you were out of the office and wouldn't be back any more, and your secretary meant you would come *if* you came back that afternoon."

Caridius did not go into the question as to whether he was in or out of his office when the message was dispatched.

"Well, now that I'm here, what do you want?"

"Yes, yes, I'm coming to that, of course. . . . Caridius, what do you think of the Senate?"

The congressman's irritation came to an abrupt halt.

"You mean me for the Senate?"

"Yes, you . . . how does that wind set in the mainsail of your ambition?" The Jew was bubbling as usual.

Caridius thought how deeply it would please Mary Littenham and how exactly it would fall in with her plans.

"Why, naturally I would want to . . . but Loree is senator . . ."

"Sure he's senator, but look what he's done . . . ridden roughshod over the rights of this state in order to court the favor of a rapacious corporation!" The lawyer said this with a swift Hebraic clipping of his consonants and stretching out of his vowels.

"What has he done?" inquired Caridius blankly.

"Violated states' rights. . . . Joe! Joe! Come in here and tell Mr. Caridius what Senator Loree has done!"

An inner door of the lawyer's private office opened, and the small black-haired racketeer appeared, glancing at his own reflection in the dim frosted-glass mirror of the outer door.

"Joe, tell Mr. Caridius what Senator Loree has done."

The Italian began in a liquid voice that contrasted with the Jew's English:

"He put men at the munitions plant and stopped my racket."

"What men?"

"Federal men . . . government agents," explained the Italian with a soft intensity.

"On what grounds . . . by what right?"

"I put my men down there," went on the racketeer, "to collect what Littenham stole from me in his bank. And now Loree stops me when I have contributed to elect him every time he runs. Now Loree puts federal men at the plant to choke off my graft!"

"I don't see how he could put federal men doing state police work," repeated Caridius.

"That's the very point you are going to hang your cam-

paign on," pointed out Myerberg enthusiastically. "Loree went before a federal court and represented that the munitions plant was doing an interstate business and Canarelli's men were interfering with interstate commerce. So he argued the policing of the plant would fall under federal control. It is simply another artifice by which the federal government is expanding its power at the expense of state sovereignty! It is setting an iniquitous precedent of usurping the police powers of a free and independent state by the device of the Interstate Commerce Commission. It has flouted the wisdom of our forefathers who framed our government, it has turned statehood into a travesty and individual liberty into a mockery! And we can take that cause before the people and oust him out of his seat at this coming election!"

"I pay off the state and city police," said Canarelli in a quiet taut tone; "then when I send my men to collect what the bank owes me there are the government men who will take nothing. They simply stand there, listening to no reason, and stop business!"

"And exactly what do I do now?" inquired Caridius.

"Protest against the invasion of states' rights to lay the foundation of your race for the Senate!"

"That's right," snapped the racketeer, "I need a senator of my own. I can't go partners in a senator with Littenham any more. From now on we are two men, Merritt Littenham and me."

"Joe means that he is going to throw his political influence on the side of states' rights," explained Myerberg. "He believes in it, and he is patriotic enough to spend his hard-earned wealth in fighting for what he considers to be the highest governmental ideals."

"Well, quite apart from what Joe wants or doesn't want," declared Caridius, "a strongly centralized government with despotic powers is directly antagonistic to the spirit of the American Constitution and the American people!"

"You hear that, Joe?" cried Myerberg in a pleased tone. "Mr. Caridius looks above the petty partisanship of the mo-

ment and views the long reaches of American history with the eye of a statesman and a patriot."

"What do you want me to do right now?" inquired Caridius, thinking of Mary Littenham and wondering if there would be any earthly way to get her to fly back to Washington with him that night.

"That was our rush for you," explained Myerberg. "You must qualify for the race today. You must file a petition with the state chairman of your party, signed by twenty-four citizens sixty days before the election. Today is the sixtieth day before the election. Your petition must be filed at the state capitol before midnight."

The urgency of the situation moved Caridius.

"Mr. Canarelli, this is perfectly new to me. I must give it as full consideration as possible. Would you allow me to consult with my partner for a few moments?"

"Sure," agreed the Italian, and he started into the outer office looking into the frosted glass and brushing his hand over his polished marcelled hair as he went.

"Sol," said Caridius in a lowered tone, "I . . . have investments in the Westover Trust Company."

"You have . . . how much?"

"Well . . . I bought some mining stock and received a profit of nearly seven thousand dollars the other day."

"Mm—mm, that was after you got on the military committee in Congress, wasn't it?"

"Yes."

"Well, you understand, of course, that Joe here got you put on that committee. He told you he would in this office . . . and he did."

"But I thought after I had made my . . . er . . . investment in the Westover bank . . ."

"Listen, my friend, in politics you must act politically. You can never allow any individual or favors from any individual to stand between you and a higher office where you will be able to serve your country more fully."

"Why yes, I see that."

"The reason there can never be any personal faith in politics, Henry, and there is none, is patriotism."

"I had never thought of that, but I see it's true."

"And this particular senatorship, offered by Canarelli, is of enormous importance. It makes you a liaison man between the underworld and the upper world so that you can control, mitigate and civilize to some extent the criminal element of the country and so protect the people."

Caridius stood nodding.

"For you with your opportunity and talent to allow a trivial favor from Merritt Littenham to stand between you and your full meed of service to your country would be high treason, Henry Caridius!"

"Sol, I see it. Have we got time to send in my petition by midnight?"

"It is all written out, signed by good and reputable citizens, and merely awaits your own signature. Canarelli has a flier named Lang, quite a dare-devil, who will get your petition to the capitol of this state in less than an hour's time."

"But do you suppose, if I do run, we'll get the votes against Loree with Krauseman behind him?"

"Joe and I have been working on an organization of our own."

"You don't mean it?"

"And we'd just like to test it out."

"Suppose the people should get stirred up over this fight and take a hand in the voting?"

"Oh, this is not a presidential election . . . there's not a chance of that."

Late that night, when the Honorable Henry Lee Caridius left Sol Myerberg's office for his home, the lawyer's arguments still rattled in his head. Caridius knew that to the Jew this reasoning was casuistry, but he, Henry Lee Caridius, with Anglo-Saxon idealism, would put into practice what his partner had phrased in words. He wondered if Mary Litten-

ham would be able to see his side of an out-and-out states' rights race against her father's candidate, Senator Loree. . . . States' rights stood for American individualism. The mere fact that a racketeer was invoking its aid in his racket was no argument against a salutary principle of government that had been handed down like a precious heirloom since the federation of the American colonies. . . .

Here the speech he was making to Mary Littenham, trying to convince her of the righteousness of his candidacy, suddenly shifted to an ache for her presence. Had it not been for his candidacy he would at this moment be in her arms.

Somewhat later, as he entered the Albemarle Apartments, he thought of Ellora and how she would enjoy the position of being a senator's wife. It would be a kind of payment to her for the fact that Mary Littenham was his mistress; a kind of balancing of accounts. And it would be natural, too, for a man in a very high position to enjoy two establishments.

He entered his bedroom in rather a glow of pleasure that he could give Ellora something she would enjoy. He bent over her twin bed and touched her round, enticing white arm that lay on the cover.

"Ellora! Ellora!" he whispered.

She awoke with a little start and looked at him, bewildered.

"What time is it?"

"Ellora, I am going to run for the Senate," he announced in an exultant whisper.

This made no impression at all.

"Where have you been all this time?"

"At Myerberg's office," glowed Caridius, "planning the details of my race. We sent in my petition by airplane . . . I suppose it is flying there this very minute."

"Was that Connie Stott in the office with you men?"

"Darling, darling, wake up, Connie Stott is Connie Myer-

berg, and so you would no longer refer to her as 'that Connie' anything."

"Then you didn't take her home in a taxi and give her a thousand dollars?"

"My God, no, darling, I am running for the Senate."

"Well, you are always taking married women home in taxis and giving them a thousand dollars. . . ."

Sleep rushed on her again. She gave her husband a half-focused look to make sure that he had obtained no mitigation of the flesh from unauthorized sources and went complacently to sleep again.

Caridius stopped thinking about his political future and fell to pondering on Ellora. He knew quite well the suspicion that had just flickered through her mind. And he wondered why wives objected so strenuously to a husband's incontinence when they cared nothing about his givings for themselves.

The congressman thought over this riddle until he was bathed and ready for bed. As he turned down his covers an answer came to him. A husband was a more alert, aggressive provider before the act of love than he was afterwards. It was to a wife's advantage to deprive her husband and to see that other women also gave him no comfort. It was simply a good housewife's economy of the resources in her own home. Caridius looked across at his sleeping wife. Of course she could never have thought up such a theory. It was instinctive, born in her from the experience of hard-run, half-starved, jealous grandmothers back in a line to Adam.

38

THE NEXT MORNING when Caridius breakfasted alone and set forth for Washington, Ellora instantly vanished from his thoughts in his renewed concern as to what Mary Littenham would think of his senatorial race. He bought three or four papers when he started for the airport and looked over them in the taxicab.

The front page of the *Tribune* held no reference at all to his candidacy. He turned through the paper a little anxiously, and on the fifth page, in a column headed Political Points, found a three-line notice without any caption of its own. This announced his candidacy for the seat in the Senate that would be vacated by Senator Herbert M. Loree, and added the information that Senator Loree would be a candidate to succeed himself. On the same page was a two-column sketch of the life and accomplishments of Senator Herbert M. Loree. On the fourth page ran a long editorial headed, "Educating Congressmen" in which the writer spoke of the temerity of a young member of the Lower House without experience or background in entering the senatorial race against an able and patriotic statesman who had been an incumbent in the office for many terms. The writer then went on to bewail the public's lack of means to gauge the educational qualifications of any candidate.

The time has long since passed [said the editorial], when our country was so thinly populated as to allow the electo-

rate to see, know and discriminate among a given group of candidates. Today the people know nothing whatever of their candidates except that which is vouchsafed them by a partisan press. A doctor is not allowed to treat a hangnail without an examination before the state medical board. A lawyer cannot appear before a magistrate's court without obtaining his license to practice law. Even a real-estate dealer must prove himself informed in his calling before he can sell a village lot. Only men who aspire to represent our nation before the world, write its laws, rule its industry, control its destiny, are permitted to assume their office by whatever hook or crook they can get it without any formal inquiry as to whether they have even a grammar-school education.

The editorial nettled Caridius. It was clearly aimed at him, implying that he was an uneducated man. On the contrary he himself would heartily approve especial training for all men who aspired to politics. He would have, if he could encompass it, a University of Politics in Washington which would correspond in political education with what West Point and Annapolis were in military education. He would have it that an appointment to a cadetship in such a school would be the highest scholastic honor in the gift of the nation. That would be the sort of thing for which he would expend every ounce of his energy and influence, but . . . the other congressmen would have none of it. That obstacle stood clearly before him . . . the other congressmen would have none of it.

He picked up another paper and turned through it. Here he saw his picture, on the third page, with the caption, "Brilliant Young Congressman Enters Race for Senate." He sat gazing at it in delight, wondering how much attention it would attract from the vast, momentary-minded American public. He had this paper in his pocket, folded at his picture, when an hour and a quarter later his plane landed him in Washington.

A few minutes afterward, when he set forth to Capitol Hill, doubt came over him again as to how Mary Littenham would look upon his race for the Senate. His apprehension upon this point gradually became more and more disturbing, until, just before he arrived at his office, he took one last long look at his picture, then held it out of the window of his cab and after a moment dropped it.

After Caridius had committed this modified form of harakiri he sat simply riding along in his taxicab, thinking of nothing, until presently it was drawn to his attention that his vehicle was moving very slowly. He looked out to determine the trouble and saw that his cab was creeping along in the midst of a long straggling procession of women.

The driver presently pushed back the glass partition and asked if he should take another street and added honestly that it would lengthen the trip to the extent of about one more zone.

Caridius was on the verge of assenting but asked who the women were.

"It's the clubs, sir, coming from all over," said the taxicab man. "They come to Washington every year to elect a president."

"Where are they going now?"

"To Convention Hall, sir."

"They look hot."

"Yes sir, a parade of women always looks hot and bothered, sir . . . they always seem to be in a rush trying to keep up with themselves."

Caridius sat watching the line as his car moved slowly along the boulevard. Then he observed banners lifted above the line of march. His cab passed more than a dozen banners all inscribed with the motto:

CARVE THE ROCKIES!

CARVE THE ROCKIES!

CARVE THE ROCKIES!

There was something familiar about the slogan. He was trying to peg his impression to a particular place and date when the text on the banners suddenly changed. From half-way back to the head of the column the marchers bore aloft the injunction:

LANDSCAPE THE SEA!

LANDSCAPE THE SEA!

LANDSCAPE THE SEA!

When Caridius reached his suite in the old House office building, sight of the hind quarters of the great Dane lying in his open door drove the drollery of the women's procession from his mind. He went inside, cajoled the huge dog into letting him shut the door, and held out his arms to Mary Littenham.

When their dual gust had subsided and they could talk about other things than the depth and intensity of their love Miss Littenham remembered an engagement:

"Listen, Henry, Mrs. Sassinet telephoned for you to come to her reception at the Farragut Hotel this morning."

"Who's Mrs. Sassinet?"

"Don't you remember, the woman who came in here one afternoon and wanted you to introduce a bill to make statues out of the Rocky Mountains?"

"Oh, certainly, I saw her procession from my taxi coming over."

"She telephoned me to send you to her reception, she wants to be photographed with you."

"Why does she want to be photographed with me?"

"She thinks it would be good publicity for you and her both. She is running for the presidency of the Women's Clubs on her carve-the-Rockies ticket."

Caridius wondered if he could successfully explain to Ellora, in the event his wife ever saw such a picture, why he was photographed with another woman. She would almost surely jump at an incorrect conclusion.

"I saw some more banners this morning, 'Landscape the Sea' . . . what did that mean?"

"Oh, that's the party catchword of Mrs. Lofton-Biltrom's constituents. She is running for president on a ticket opposing Mrs. Sassinet. And since the opposite of 'Carve the Rockies' is 'Landscape the Sea' her motto was almost forced on her."

"But does it mean anything in particular?"

"Oh yes, Mrs. Lofton-Biltrom is asking Congress to appropriate five million dollars to beautify all the American harbors so that foreigners when they approach our shores will receive a good impression. She is asking members of Congress to be photographed with her at the Imperial Hotel. So listen, if I'm going to help you in your race for the Senate, go on down to the Farragut and get photographed with Mrs. Sassinet. It will influence thousands of women's votes. . . ."

"My own race for the Senate!" ejaculated Caridius, looking at the girl.

"Certainly. And look here, I cut your picture out of the *News* before I left home this morning. It gave you a very nice write-up. Here it is. It is a good idea to save these clippings; then if the *News* ever turns against you, you can publish their own articles in their columns as advertising. Dr. Snell mentioned it to us as one of the disgraceful subterfuges to which politicians sometimes stooped. . . . My idea is now, if we are entering this race against Father's man, we had better go in prepared to stoop."





MARY LITTENHAM's immediate and whole-hearted espousal of his candidacy for the Senate had a disturbing pro-moral effect on the Honorable Henry Lee Caridius.

As he drove to the Farragut Hotel the feeling grew stronger and stronger upon him that he could not take Mary Littenham as a mistress. She had shown herself too unservedly his partisan and friend, even against her father's candidate, Senator Loree, for him to treat her so shabbily. He felt it would be shameful to meet her whole-heartedness with anything less. So he decided firmly that he would follow by her the strictest rule of conservatism and honor among the American wealthy class. He would divorce his wife Ellora and take Mary Littenham in formal marriage.

It has often been reported in perfervid evangelical meetings in the Southern states of America that when a sinner once gets his heart right a great peace of God descends upon him. Unhappily, there is no God in America as far North as Washington, but nevertheless, when Caridius made this firm decision, in accord with his higher and better nature, a great restfulness and calm, if not godly, then psychological, did descend upon him. And so, with the Ellora-Mary Littenham matter off his mind, he went forward with interest to the Farragut Hotel to see how he would react to Mrs. Sassinnet.

For two blocks around the Hotel Farragut the streets were crowded with women. The long Gothic corridor of the

hostelry was the focus of this gathering. Here were the headquarters of the "Carve the Rockies" forces. Across town in the Hotel Imperial gathered the clans devoted to the policy of Landscaping the Sea. The two belligerents were locked in battle in the form of teas. They were giving teas.

Along the central hallway were stationed uniformed servants who shouted at regular intervals:

"All the way back to Mrs. Sassinet's reception! All the way back to Mrs. Sassinet's reception!"

As Caridius entered he saw a man with a large camera maneuvering his burden through the jammed women. The politician tried to fend for the fellow in such a crowd of women. The cameraman nodded at him.

"You are Mr. Caridius?"

"Yes," shouted back Caridius.

"I'm sent here by the *Gazette* to shoot you and Mrs. Sassinet!"

Caridius gesticulated his assent and began assisting the photographer to work his camera and box of flashlights through the throng. The flashlights seemed unnecessary to Caridius.

"What you bring them for . . . in the middle of the day?" he called above the aviary-like din of the women.

"Dust in the air . . . Western dust storm just getting here now . . . cuts down the short rays . . . like deep afternoon."

"I declare!" ejaculated Caridius.

Just here a fat woman who was already cross because she knew her chiffon dress would be melted down long before she could reach the reception room twisted about in the jam and snapped:

"Quit shoving me!"

"Sorry!" shouted the photographer apologetically. "I'm from the *Gazette* . . . this camera's clumsy."

The woman instantly cried aloud:

"Listen, everybody, this man's from the *Gazette*!"

Many women turned to look. Others took up the cry:

"He's from the *Gazette*!"

"Put him out!"

"Hit him! Break his camera!"

"His paper made fun of us and our program!"

And the next moment Caridius was amazed to see the photographer slapped, punched, his camera jerked from his hands, his flashlights smashed. The politician shouted and tried to get to the unfortunate man, but the fellow was shoved this way and that, hatless and disheveled in the general direction of the entrance. Caridius saw some bellboys rush toward the victim, form a screen around him, and work him to a side door through which he disappeared.

Caridius himself was wedged in the jam, and so he moved willy-nilly down the long hallway and finally eddied into the great salon where Mrs. Sassinet was holding her reception. Mrs. Sassinet herself was in full evening dress, wearing two corsages of orchids, one on each shoulder strap. Her pages, young girls in white dresses, who received their appointments as a very great honor, pushed themselves slowly and strenuously through the crush.

When Mrs. Sassinet saw a man enter the room she beckoned him toward her. Her pages in white flung themselves forward to make way for his approach.

"Senator Caridius!" shouted the great woman with the orchids, "I am so glad you have come! Mrs. Cantle, Mrs. Alsop, Mrs. Inman, let me introduce my dear friend Senator Caridius, the man who did more than any other member of Congress to put through our famous 'Carve the Rockies' bill."

"My part was very small, but my pleasure and pride in doing it were very great," said Caridius, bowing in all directions.

"Don't be modest, Senator!"

"Accept honors that are yours, Senator!"

"And I must disclaim the title of Senator at this moment," protested Caridius.

"We may be premature, but we are not mistaken, Sena-

tor," declared Mrs. Sassinet. "He'll be elected, won't he, girls?"

"Yes! Yes!" "We're going to vote for you, Senator!" "We women will put you in!" "We read about your meteoric rise, Senator!"

"Senator Caridius' rise in Congress is closely linked to my own in the Women's Clubs!" shouted Mrs. Sassinet, nodding and smiling.

"Why do you say that, May?" called a voice in the uproar.

"Because he was the first congressman with whom I entered consultation about our great patriotic 'Carve the Rockies' movement." A clapping of hands at this. "That is why I know we will both be elected," she continued loudly. "I earnestly believe that our stars are crossed!"

More applause at this. By now Caridius was close enough to shake hands with the great woman, and such loud talking became unnecessary. Another dowager near by asked Mrs. Sassinet why she said what she did about stars being crossed.

"Why, Jane, as soon as I reached Washington I wanted to know if I would be elected, so I went to a fortune teller . . ."

"Yes . . ."

"And she said my star was crossed with that of a dark handsome man."

Caridius bowed.

Jane lifted her plucked and darkened eyebrows.

"How did you know it was your political star, dear?"

"Well . . . I didn't, but I asked. I said, 'Do you mean my political star?' and the fortune teller said, 'Oh yes, I mean your political star. Whatever happens to that dark handsome man will happen to you.'"

There were gasps and ejaculations among the great officials of the Women's Clubs.

"Well, isn't that strange, how she knew that?"

"There is something to it . . . you know . . . just something."

Then a skeptic broke in:

"The trouble about it is that your election comes off before Mr. Caridius' does; so what happens to him couldn't be a forecast of yours, May."

Laughter broke out at this. Mrs. Sassinet was momentarily disconcerted when Caridius interposed:

"It's another case of prophecy after the event, it is always much more accurate when given in that order."

Great laughter at this, especially among the women who were a bit puzzled to know what he meant, and Caridius saw that he was making himself votes.

Here Mrs. Sassinet beckoned to one of her pages.

"Where is the photographer?" she called.

"The photographer, Mrs. Sassinet?" repeated the girl looking over the sea of women.

"Yes, I asked the *Gazette* to send a photographer and take a picture of Mr. Caridius and . . . the rest of us."

"Why, Mrs. Sassinet," explained Caridius in a somewhat lowered tone, "the photographer came in with me, but . . . uh . . . he . . . went out again."

"Went out again?"

"Well . . . yes, you see he was pushing his way through the ladies rather roughly . . . with his camera and flashlights . . . and the bellboys saw it and got around him and worked him out the side door."

"That served him right," called one of the women, "the *Gazette* has been making fun of our meetings. I don't care if their photographer did get put out for misbehaving himself!"

Mrs. Sassinet made the generous gesture of a great natural politician.

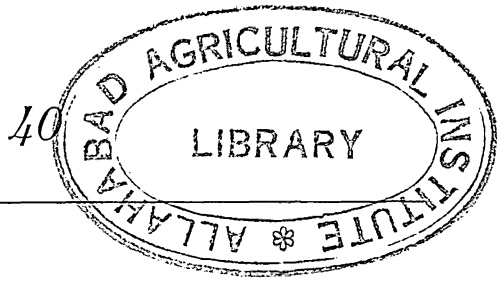
"But, listen, we can't help it if the newspapermen are boorish. We must have our pictures in the paper. Telephone for another photographer!"

The request was repeated through the reception room and into the great hallway outside.

"Telephone the *Gazette* for another photographer!"

"Telephone the *Gazette* for another photographer!" and so on until it vanished from hearing.

"In the meantime, Senator Caridius," suggested Mrs. Sassinet, "you stay here and be prepared next time to protect us women from the rudeness of Washington newspaper photographers."



THREE DAYS LATER Caridius received an urgent request from Myerberg to come to Megapolis. When he took a plane at the flying field, he found his colleague, the Honorable Josiah Bing, on his way north on a tour of inspection of the government fish hatcheries. The Honorable Josiah was in an expansive mood, and when they were well launched in the air he explained that he had got himself assigned to inspect the fish hatcheries because he liked trout fishing over the week-end during the warm season.

"It's a bit cool yet," he explained, "but I thought I would go up and see if they are striking."

Caridius listened absently, thinking of his relations with Mary Littenham. Every day since the Women's Clubs began their convention he had expected that she would spend the night in Washington; instead, late each afternoon, she had flown back to Pine Manor, she and her dog. The congressman did not want to plead with her to remain in Washington, especially when he had fully determined to divorce his wife and marry the girl before they began living together. However, the silent assistance she was giving him in carrying out his resolution was very trying to him. So now he had nothing to say to the Honorable Josiah.

However mere quietude in a companion never affected Mr. Bing. He touched the lapel of his coat.

"See this gardenia, Caridius, have you any idea what that cost?"

As Caridius answered that he had not, the flower naturally recalled Mary Littenham to his thoughts with a more painful sense of privation.

"One hundred and seventeen thousand dollars annually . . . the government, not me. That's what it costs the government to furnish posies for congressional buttonholes, and . . . er . . . the friends of those buttonholes. Congress really is an extraordinary assembly. I have often wondered why it doesn't divide up the United States Treasury and head for Mexico and other points South, but the members don't do it. Somehow it doesn't seem to click . . . at least, not so far." The fat man beamed on his seat mate, then asked cheerfully, "What are you in the dumps about?"

Caridius cast about for a reason for his dumps and remembered how the *Gazette* had treated him.

"Oh, that," flouted Mr. Bing lightly, "well, you shouldn't have beat up the photographer who came to take your picture. Of course, I admit it was gallant to protect the ladies, as a Southerner I would have done the same thing, but I would have picked out a taxicab driver or something like that to protect them from . . . nobody so vocal as a newspaper man."

"I didn't, I helped the fellow," complained Caridius. "I stood between him and several of the fiercest of the club-women. The *Gazette* reporter just took it into his head to write it up the way he did."

Mr. Bing roared with laughter.

"My God, man, you deserved all you got! Fought against the ladies who were to be photographed with you! What caitiff conduct! You should have struck the fellow down for daring to exist in the presence of the ladies."

"I would have, but I couldn't get to him, they were striking him down themselves."

Mr. Bing shook his great head.

"I swear the North and the South are so different. Now in the South just any group of clubwomen would have stood back and allowed their escort to strike a photographer down. But in the North the women can't rely on their escorts. Here you were trying to help the fellow get away. So the poor ladies had to shift for themselves. But of course Southern women are different from Northern women anyway . . . they would have refrained, possibly because they were lazy, as all Southern people are, or possibly because of unfortunate inhibitions brought about by early training received at the hands of their lady mothers . . . something like that."

Caridius smiled a little at Mr. Bing, who, as a professional Southerner, was always aiming elephantine irony at the North.

Mr. Bing himself was disappointed at the amount of appreciation he had received. He considered that he had done quite well.

At Megapolis the fishery inspector took another plane headed farther North, and Caridius went at once to Sol Myerberg's office.

When he reached the place Myerberg, as usual, was impatient to see him. The short stout lawyer got up from his desk with the abruptness characteristic of men of his build; he held out a postcard.

"Look at this," he directed with an air of the greatest importance.

Caridius took it with some curiosity. It was an ordinary picture postcard with the photograph of a San Francisco skyscraper on its back. The address side, however, bore this line:

We are going to mail in our absentee votes for you from Honolulu. Loads of luck from, The Essarys.

Caridius was appreciative of the thoughtfulness of the Essarys.

"That's very friendly of them."

"It's not just friendliness, it's an idea," snapped Myerberg in his incisive fashion.

"What's that?"

"These people like you. You have attended to a little business for them, you have collected your commission on the sale of Essary's invention to Japan, and they still like you."

Caridius was amused at these qualifiers.

"Yes," went on the Jew, "there is something distinctly likable about you, Caridius. Almost anybody might like you. For instance, that Independent Voters' Alliance that gave you your start, the only reason for that ridiculous organization was because they liked——"

"Now why do you call them ridiculous?"

"Because they were not after anything for themselves. They had no idea of sending you to Congress, and now, after you are there, they don't come up and present their bill. No, it was just an aimless gesture. It is as if they placed a bet on a roulette table just to watch the wheel go around."

"Let me see, you were mentioning an idea. . . ."

Myerberg became serious.

"Sit down."

Caridius sat. The Jew returned to his swivel chair and leaned toward him.

"Littenham is going to flood this district with money to beat you."

"How do you know?"

"Krauseman told me. He has some of the money already. He placed three thousand dollars with me with a suggestion that I work for Loree."

"You didn't take it?"

"Naturally I took it. I have always received money from Krauseman at the beginning of political campaigns."

"But you are not . . . Say, you didn't ask me here to tell me you are going to work for——"

Myerberg waved his hand in front of his face as if brushing away a fly.

"Hell, no, I'm resigning from Krauseman's organization. That's the way a man resigns: he takes what money he can get and starts working for the other man. Don't worry about that, it is a perfectly formal procedure."

Caridius considered this stiff punctilio for a moment and then said:

"All right, where do I come in?"

"It's this . . . we've got to work you."

"You don't mean . . . as you have worked Krauseman?"

"Oh my God, no! But, of course, you being a congressman would inject that meaning into the word 'work.' No, I mean work . . . you know, do things with your hands or brain."

The Jew's satire was just a little too effusive for the Gentile's appetite.

"All right, that's what we mean . . . work."

"And, I'm sorry, of course, to suggest such a thing, but as a matter of fact Canarelli's money is running short. The Westover bank really cut into the Big Shot's ready cash. And you know it makes Joe so damned mad for Littenham to take his money and use it politically against his man . . . now there you are, that ought to cure you of any little qualm you feel for us to take Krauseman's three thousand and spend it on you: we are getting back just a drop of the barrelful Littenham stole from us."

"I have agreed that your escutcheon is burnished and your honor undimmed on that point, now what is it you want me to do?"

"Why . . . this: As I say, Joe's money is running short, and if you are elected you are going to have to make up the fiscal difference between what Littenham spends and what Joe can spend . . . make it up . . . you know . . . in personality . . . charm . . . likableness . . . sex appeal."

"You mean get out and stump the districts?"

"Yes, that's it. Now mind you, I apologize. I certainly regret to say to a candidate of mine, 'Get out and persuade the people to vote for you.' 'Use your personality and rake

in the boob ballots.' It is a very subversive way of getting votes."

"Subversive of what?"

"Why, good government. Don't you know that a man who has personality seldom has anything else? He just pleases, like a comedian or a woman. I tell you political position should always be bought and sold. Every vote should be paid for, not one seduced by the specious glamour of oratory. If a man has the money to buy the votes, that proves he has the ability to get money. He is a business man and an executive and is qualified for a position as lawmaker and executive in politics. But . . . when a man has to get out and beg for votes . . . when he has to show himself and make speeches . . . that's falling pretty low . . . it is the nadir of political corruption. They do that sort of thing a good deal in other parts of our country . . . the West and the South . . . but, thank God, the capitalists of the North have, up till now, kept our section of the Union free from such a debauchery of the ballot. And what has been the result? The result is that the East has always returned able men to Congress, and we have easily maintained the political hegemony of the nation!"

"You want me to make speeches?"

"Not only make speeches but produce an issue. Raise a great public demonstration in your favor about something. Arouse the middle class who ordinarily neither vote nor sell their votes, bring them out to the polls. In other words, inflate the ballot box with so many idle, sentimental and unpurchasable votes that the Littenham interests can't find enough voters for sale to swing the election."

Caridius saw that his partner was in earnest about the matter. He sat thinking.

"I don't believe I can write a speech that will move the public like that."

"It isn't the speech so much. Canarelli can hire you a ghost writer to do that. It's the issue."

"The issue?"

"Certainly, that's the great pitfall of American politics, no issue . . . nothing that anybody really cares about. . . . It's got to be an issue about which they can care . . . arouse their emotions . . . it must not appeal to their intelligence, but to their emotions."

"Now look here," protested Caridius, "why do you say that?"

"Because the intelligent people of America already vote and get paid for it one way or another. They are the machine voters. What you are after is that vast majority who never appraise the political situation and vote in a sensible businesslike way but who must be shoved clear to the wall economically or tremendously excited over something before they'll vote. You have got to heat up and boil over this great mutton-suet vote of America if you stand any chance at all of getting elected to Senator Loree's seat."

Caridius recognized the truth that lay buried beneath all these words and sarcasm. He rubbed his chin.

"Well, what will the issue be?" he inquired.

"Ah, that's the question . . . what will it be? It must be dramatic, or at least what actors call good theater, because it must compete over the radio with all the music and vaudeville stunts of the commercial advertisers. Merely because you are talking about politics that affect the whole country is no reason in the world why a voter would switch his radio from an end man's gag and listen to you. In fact, it is a reason why he will switch from you to the end man . . . so your issue has got to be excellent theater."

Caridius sat gazing out of the fifteenth-story window of the Lecksher Building trying to think of an issue which would provide excellent theater for the mutton-suet vote of America. The tender spring sky into which he gazed brought to his mind, with the characteristic perversity of such skies, a thought of Mary Littenham. If he went too far in his opposition to her father's candidate, there must be a point somewhere at which he would lose the daughter's regard. So instead of trying to think up a dramatic issue Caridius be-

gan seriously considering withdrawing from the race altogether.

Myerberg, however, unaware of this desertion of his generalissimo, rubbed his purplish shaven jowls with a faint scraping sound, reached higher to scratch his curly black head, and finally punched his buzzer.

An office boy came to the door.

"Send in Meltofsky." The lawyer turned to Caridius. "Meltofsky is utterly impervious to any feeling of sentiment, drama, patriotism or emotion of any kind, so he will bring us a detached point of view as to what issue will really arouse the great American public."

As he said this the door opened and there entered a thin man with a long yellow face and sad protruding brown eyes under sleepy lids. Myerberg began explaining the kind of issue Caridius needed in his campaign for the Senate, and before he had finished Meltofsky drawled out in the soft voice of an orthodox Jew:

"Income tax."

"Oh, income tax," nodded Myerberg reflectively, "yes . . . I had thought of that." This last phrase Myerberg invariably used at any suggestion Meltofsky ever made. ". . . Whose, Littenham's or Loree's?"

"Either one," said Meltofsky in his singsong: "they haven't paid them."

Myerberg tapped his desk with stumpy fingers.

"No, no, of course not."

"Littenham's unpaid income tax must be so immense that it is dramatic, unless it's absurd," observed Meltofsky.

"How do you mean . . . absurd?" inquired Myerberg quickly.

"I mean if it is so large that the average American can't realize what the sum means it simply becomes fantastic to him and will arouse no feeling at all."

Myerberg nodded.

"Yes, I was thinking that very thing when you spoke it."

"And besides that," added the sad-eyed lawyer, "when it

becomes publicly known that Littenham is an income-tax evader in the higher brackets, wouldn't the American people admire him for it?"

Myerberg nodded sharply.

"Meltofsky, you take the words out of my mouth before I say them."

"I sometimes do," said Meltofsky in his disinterested voice.

"So we will discard that idea, eh?" inquired Myerberg aggressively.

"No, that will be the introduction."

"Introduction?"

"Certainly, there will have to be two or three movements in the campaign against Loree. You couldn't possibly use your serious charge first, or the voters would get bored with it before the election. No, you want a minor charge first to get their attention. Play that along for a while until you get the public watching you, then spring your major accusation. You take a Beethoven symphony, suppose Beethoven introduced his major development before the first simple statement of his theme . . ."

Myerberg wagged a hand at Meltofsky.

"That's all right." He turned to Caridius. "My partner is crazy about music, classical music, but thank God I'm more of an American than that. . . . So you think it will be best for us to start at once with a prosecution for Merritt Littenham's unpaid income tax?"

"By all means, as an introduction, using the term, of course, symphonically."

"Well, how will we start such a suit?"

"We don't have to start it. All we need to do is to offer evidence to the district collector's office tending to show that Merritt Littenham has not paid his income tax. And the office of the District Collector of Internal Revenue is just like a mill. It has to grind whatever falls into its hopper. You see they have really never been fixed. Very wealthy men have always depended on the upper courts."

"So you will arrange that?" inquired Myerberg.

"I'll have it going inside of a week."

"Do that. . . . Now the second bombshell, our major offensive really to rouse up the people to such a pitch that they will come out and vote for nothing, what'll that be, Meltofsky?"

The drooping-eyed man leaned back in his chair, put a hand to his head and seemed to go completely to sleep.

"I . . . haven't really studied the situation . . ." he murmured faintly out of his coma, ". . . public utilities . . . of course he has been robbing the public for many many years. . . ."

"That's been overdone . . . people don't respond to it any more. Might as well try to stir up sympathy for the victims of the racketeers. Both have become customary, and that ends it."

"True . . . very true . . ." murmured Meltofsky, nodding with closed eyes.

At this point Caridius decided that unless he wanted to be in the center of an enormous political storm that would certainly lose him the affection of Mary Littenham he would better bolt his incipient political party while there was time. He cleared his throat and began the anterior-palatal sound, "Er-r-r," which men use when driven by necessity to speak before they have decided what they should say.

"Have you thought of something?" asked Myerberg.

"Well . . . no . . . yes . . . I would like to say that I am in a very peculiar situation in regard to this matter."

"How's that?"

"Well, the Littenham bank has just . . . er . . . invested some of . . . my money with such success that they have just cleared for me nearly seven thousand dollars. Now for me to accept these . . . er . . . services and then attack my benefactor . . ."

"Benefactor?" questioned Myerberg.

"Yes, Mr. Littenham, who arranged my deal."

"What did you do for him?"

"Well, I was on the Committee on Military Affairs, as you know, and I argued that the War Department should give the munitions plant the right to sell Essary's secret formula, thinking, of course, that the War Department would have to pay Essary and thereby help out one of our clients."

Meltofsky opened his eyes and waggled a forefinger feebly at the two men.

"There's the issue."

"How?" snapped Myerberg.

"Littenham interests sell military secret to foreign enemies."

"But we can't use that," objected Caridius. "I made a speech myself favoring the sale."

Myerberg suddenly saw his partner's point.

"My God, man, that makes no difference at all!" he cried, his face flushing dark with enthusiasm. "The people will never know you supported the sale, especially if you bring it up against Littenham and Loree in your campaign!"

"Yes, but my speech is down in the Congressional Record!"

"Fine, let it stay there, nobody reads the Congressional Record!"

"Yes, but Loree will bring it up and show it to the public."

"Nobody will believe him. Everybody will think it is a political trick. That's our slogan: 'Loree Betrays the American Doughboy.' Don't say 'country' or 'nation' or 'War Department,' nothing like that . . . say 'doughboy.' That's intimate, personal, it will make the man on the street hot under the collar and give him something to vote against."



41

AFTER SPENDING a very bad night indeed, the Honorable Henry Lee Caridius was disturbed early in the morning by a radio in the apartment immediately above his own. In the silence of the morning he could hear the machine quite plainly. It was saying in the bright, semi-humorous, preciously enunciated voice of the professional broadcaster:

"Dust storms continue to rage in the West. . . . Professional Boy led the way in the Preakness handicap paying three seventy-five. . . . Congressman Henry Lee Caridius enters the headlines a second time in his sensational charge that a certain great munitions magnate has sold abroad one of America's most valuable and deadly war secrets. He charges congressional conspiracy in aiding the magnate in this treachery and lays the onus on Senator Loree, for whose seat in the Senate Congressman Caridius is now making a hot race. . . ."

Here Caridius stopped listening, quite taken aback at how untrue and how thoroughly political such a charge would sound. Of course he would select the very senator whose seat he coveted and accuse him of selling a secret belonging to the War Department.

As a secondary thought he knew he must now surely lose Mary Littenham. She would never continue her arrangements to live with him while he made such grave accusations against her father and her father's henchman, Senator Loree.

The thought made him feel sick. He needed a whisky and got out of bed, went into the kitchenette and drank one. It was still early, but he decided he would get himself some breakfast and then take a long walk out to the aviation field and maybe he would feel better. Breakfast was simple enough. The coffee, oatmeal and eggs boiled while he shaved and dressed. When he had eaten he left his breakfast things for the maid to clean up and set forth on his walk. The moment he stepped outside the Albemarle entrance his attention was caught by the deep red light in which all the city lay bathed. He had never seen anything like it before. The color flared an angry crimson in the east and deepened westward to the hue of clotted blood. The ghastly illumination shocked him and suggested momentarily to his unscientific mind an unfortunate outcome to his new undertaking. As he stood looking up at the heavens, a scrap of an old nursery rhyme floated through his head: "Evening gray and morning red, brings down rain upon his head."

As Caridius walked along, a white wing, emboldened by the early hour, stopped his broom and lifted a hand toward the sky.

"Red morning, sir."

"Yes, so it is."

"They say it's the dust, sir."

"The dust?"

"Yes sir, the paper says it's the dust storms out West making the sky so red."

"Oh . . . that's it." Something childish and primitive in Caridius was relieved. The sky was not threatening simply him. It had a reason for being red. It couldn't help itself. "Have you got a paper?" asked Caridius. The white wing produced one from his cart. When Caridius offered him two cents for it, the fellow shook a negative hand, "It's all right, sir." In the early morning hour, the street sweeper walked a man among men. It was not until later in the day, when the traffic thickened, that he became lowly.

The newspaper itself which the street sweeper supplied

proved an irrational balm for the irrational misgiving created by the ruddy heavens. It contained the news that in Washington Mrs. Sassinet had been elected president of the Women's Clubs, and Caridius recalled how the dowager's fortune teller had foretold that her star was crossed with his own . . . whatever that meant. Of course, Caridius didn't believe a snap of his fingers in any of these old granny superstitions, but if there were signs and portents in sky and newspaper he would rather have them for him than against him. At any rate, the paper sufficiently reestablished his norm of conduct that he hailed a taxicab and rode the rest of the way to the air field. Seventy-five minutes later he was in Washington.

When the congressman walked through the corridor of the old House office building, he felt a great wave of relief when he saw Rajah's big spotted head lying in his doorway. Miss Littenham hadn't deserted him. She probably had come to tell him she was going, but she hadn't gone yet. He paused, trying to think of some argument or explanation to make to her of why he was attacking her father's income-tax record and accusing him of treason to his country, but nothing verbal occurred to him, just an inarticulate feeling of having been forced to do what he had done, of fighting with his back to the wall.

The blue-ribbon dog lying in the door shifted his eyes toward the man, then without interest returned his unwinking gaze to rest on nothing.

As Caridius entered his office, he wondered swiftly whether it would be tactful to offer to kiss his secretary as was his custom. She could stop him if she wanted to. And while he was still uncertain on the point Miss Littenham was in his arms, pressing her lips to his and bringing her faint evanescent fragrance that suggested more the smell of a fresh spring morning than it did actual flowers.

"Aren't you here a little early?" breathed the girl after their long rapt embrace.

"Why do you continue to arrive early?" inquired

Caridius, forgetting all the injury he had done her father.

She drew her face away and gave him a faint questioning smile.

"Why . . . fixing up our apartment."

Caridius' legs almost gave way under him.

"Mary! Not really!"

She nodded with her soft expression.

"Why, darling, of course . . . putting in a bath . . . putting in some furniture . . . arranging a little breakfast room and a grille."

Caridius simply looked at her.

"What does the landlady say . . . what was her name?"

"Mrs. Sebbutts . . . why nothing, she just gasps."

Desire, which had been kept in abeyance in Caridius by his questionable campaign against Merritt Littenham, now rushed suddenly over the politician.

"Listen, darling," he pleaded, pressing her to him, "let's go to the apartment tonight. . . ."

The girl leaned away from him and put a finger against his lips.

"Honey, it isn't ready, and we can't go until your race for the Senate is over."

"You have heard of my race?"

"Naturally . . . I read the papers."

Caridius was quite disconcerted. He wanted strongly to know how she and her father had taken his accusations and the income-tax suit. As there was no way to ask these things he veered to:

"What has my senatorial race got to do with tonight, sweetheart?"

"Well, it simply isn't wise for you to get a divorce from your first wife or live with me clandestinely while you are running for an elective office. The people are odd about that. Between two evenly matched candidates they select the one whose mistresses and divorces are farthest in the past. So why make your race harder to win?"

As usual there was no demur to be made to the girl's precise logic. Caridius reluctantly gave up the thought of that particular night for some indefinite night. At the same time he keenly wanted to know how his future mistress so completely overlooked his attack on her father. He drew a breath and asked in a voice that was a shade too casual to be natural:

"You saw the article about me in the *News* this morning?"

"Oh yes."

"What did . . . er . . . your father think of it?"

Miss Littenham pressed Caridius' hand with enthusiasm and affection.

"Oh, he was delighted!"

"You don't mean it?"

"Yes, he said you had more political talent than any young man he had backed for office in years."

Caridius held her at arm's length and stared at her.

"He said that?"

"Yes, he said he hoped you beat Loree in the race. He said you deserved it."

"He . . . er . . . didn't mind my mentioning . . ."

Caridius swallowed . . . "anything about the . . . er . . . War Department?"

"Certainly not," cried the girl enthusiastically. "Father's candidates always attack him violently . . . you know, to get the confidence of the people. It saves Father some money . . . he doesn't have to buy so many votes. There will be a number of free votes come to you. But this morning, when you published that he had sold a war secret to Japan, he said that was absolutely a touch of genius."

"How so?"

"Why, it would not only elect you, it would alarm the public about Japan and form the grounds for another big military appropriation to be given to the munitions company. Haven't you ever noticed how a big newspaper scare about war with Japan is always followed by a very satisfactory munitions appropriation? Yes, Father said your idea

about having sold an important military secret to Japan was a very useful variation on the old-time war scare. He predicted you would make a great statesman some day, Henry."

At this point the telephone buzzed. Miss Littenham went to the desk and lifted the receiver. While the congressman stood dizzily on the floor, he heard her speaking:

"Henry Caridius' office. . . . This is she speaking. . . . Oh, why how are you, Mrs. Sassinet? Let me congratulate you on your election to the high office of . . . What? What's that? . . . Oh, Mrs. Sassinet! . . . Oh, what a terrible thing! . . . Why yes. . . . I'll be right over!" The girl put up the receiver with a whitened face. "I'll have to run over to the Farragut for a minute!"

"Why, what's wrong?"

"Mrs. Sassinet is in great trouble. She is resigning her presidency and going home. She wanted to see me."

"Darling, what happened to her?"

"Why, her husband . . . you know the rancher who plowed up twelve thousand acres of wheat land in the West . . . he was smothered to death in a dust storm."

As Mary made hurried preparations for her departure, Caridius thought of Mrs. Sassinet. Her tragedy brought him a vague shock because a fortune teller had connected her fate with his own. Still, of course, that was completely non sequitur. How could a misfortune that happened to the clubwoman have any influence on his own future?

Presently he began thinking of the fact that the dowager had telephoned for Mary Littenham to come and comfort her the moment she heard of her husband's shocking death. Mrs. Sassinet had met Mary only once, but in her moment of deepest grief she had turned instinctively to the girl whose presence in her hotel suite would bring her the greatest publicity and social éclat. And Caridius realized that the dowager was a thoroughbred. Nothing could ever happen to Mrs. Sassinet that would catch her out of form.

When Mary Littenham started on her mission of sympathy Caridius watched her through his window and saw her signal a taxicab in the driveway. He thought how humanly kind the girl was. She had a soul as ripe, as perfect as her luxurious body. The fact that she was fond of him, that she loved him, came to the congressman like triumphant music. As he watched her motor away through the Capitol grounds, her departure was like the notes of a recessional fading to silence among the aisles of the trees.

The girl did not come back to the office that day, and in the afternoon Caridius returned to Megapolis without seeing her again.

42

DURING the following week the Honorable Henry Lee Caridius did not get to his office in Washington as he was busy with his senatorial race. Myerberg and Meltofsky were his managers in Megapolis. On the polite, on the reputable side of this political maneuvering, they made speaking engagements for their candidate. Then they arranged the mechanical end of his publicity. Myerberg, somewhat to his own surprise, found that the congressman had a voice that would record well, so he sent Caridius to a maker of talking machine records and had made a gross or two of philippics against Littenham for betraying American war secrets for filthy lucre, and he accused Loree of treason for aiding such a sale in the Senate. These phonograph disks were to be used all over the city in half-a-dozen sound wagons which Joe Canarelli had purchased for the campaign.

Besides this Myerberg made engagements for Caridius to make personal appearances before clubs, societies, prize fights, picture shows, wherever people foregathered. He apologized to his candidate for these forensic hardships.

"We will have to save Joe's money," he would explain, "by picking up all the loose free votes lying around. Joe's hard up. He will have to strong-arm a lot of votes on Election Day. You see Littenham grabbed most of Joe's money, and the Big Shot is fighting with his back to the mat."

Caridius was a little puzzled. He had no objection to Canarelli exerting all his force in assisting him, but he couldn't understand it, and asked the explanation from Myerberg.

"Why, simple enough," declared the lawyer sharply, "the Senate is the next step up. You know the banks and corporations used to own the states. They haven't got them any more. The local bosses and the underworld own the states, but the banks and corporations still own the federal government, but they won't own them forever, Mr. Caridius. I don't suppose Joe can ever really get the government as he's got the state, but he can start. The time will come when you can no more convict a racketeer in our federal courts than you can convict him in our state courts today. And when that time comes racketeering will be just as respectable as banking is today. The best brains of America will go into it. Penniless counts and dukes from Europe will swarm to America to pay suit to the daughters of the great American racketeers, who made their fortunes in a manner so strikingly similar to their own forbears. Then the stigma of commercialism will be removed from American fortunes, and we will no doubt see European royalty itself choosing queens from America. When I aid Joe Canarelli, I am doing a great patriotic act in advancing the social prestige of my nation."

The idea seemed semi-fantastic, but it was in step with the times. Sixty years ago, who would have dreamed that the oil and railroad corporations which were hounded from pillar to post, would win the governments of the states, much

less the government of the nation? Twenty years ago, who would have dreamed that the racketeers would own the state governments? There was food for thought in the lawyer's dream of a nobler, less commercial American society more closely approximating the European model being ushered in by the gunmen, the hijackers and the racketeers of America.

"Just what sort of social and moral change do you think will take place when the racketeers finally get a firm hold on the federal government?" inquired Caridius curiously.

"First and foremost, I think we will have a more sincere paternalism in our government," opined Myerberg, "because the gangster will be closer to the ordinary man in the street and will be more closely in sympathy with him.

"Then we will undoubtedly enjoy a new and refreshing recrudescence of 'honor' in American life something similar to that developed in the old South before the Civil War. Wherever power is based on force and not on chicane, honor springs up like a flower. The rule of simple brute force always demands and develops loyalty, chivalry, personal bravery. The rule of chicane or commercialism always develops trickery, disloyalty, skepticism, and the first-born of skepticism is practical science. Therefore under the racketeers our country will cease to be a nation of rascals and inventors and become militaristic religiasts. We will cease building factories and erect battleships, forts and churches. This will continue until the racketeers have used up the reserve capital accumulated by the present commercial régime of rascals and inventors. Anarchy will ensue out of which commercialism will again spring up and repeat the cycle."

Caridius laughed heartily at the Jew's drollery, then he wondered what the racketeers really would do when they captured the federal government.

Here Myerberg drew out his watch.

"You have a speaking engagement at the Fiftieth Street Property Owners' Association in fifteen minutes. Now your

line there is to offer them relief from Canarelli's Fiftieth Street Property Owners' Protective Association.

"In one hour and thirty-five minutes you are due on the docks of the Havre line and help welcome the *Gallie* on her maiden trip from Havre to Buenos Aires to Megapolis. Your cue there is to offer them relief from the dock racket.

"From there you will go to the convention of the Wholesale Poulterers' Association, and of course you will denounce Canarelli and promise them immediate relief from the poultry racket.

"But through all these speeches be sure and stress Littenham's sale of American military secrets to Japan. That will make 'em mad. They are accustomed to their own rackets, they have long ago passed the tax on to the consumer and don't mind it much. And then they know you won't be able to do a thing in the world about it. They like to hear you abuse Canarelli just for their own spiritual satisfaction. But this Japan thing, the thought that Loree helped sell an American military secret to Japan, that will rouse the spirit of seventeen seventy-six in their hearts, and they'll vote for you to the last man. Go forth, my knight, and let the American eagle of freedom scream her challenge to the world!"

The lawyer's good spirits gave Caridius a feeling of approaching success. He took his itinerary and set forth from the office. On his way he stopped at a newsstand and bought a handful of papers to read in the taxi. As he drove to his first appointment he glanced through the journals. The *Tribune*, which was a recognized Littenham organ, did not mention him at all. However, the *News*, which habitually opposed the *Tribune* on all points, praised Caridius as a patriot who attacked national treason among the plutocrats with the same fearless courage that he attacked blackmail among the gangsters.

Caridius reread this last sentence with a vague qualm as to what the writer actually meant, because he knew that Megapolis newspapermen took a sort of macabre pleasure

in hinting at what they actually thought of a candidate in the midst of what sounded to be a fanfare of praise. They did this with no disloyal intent whatever, merely to amuse themselves and the cognoscenti who understood the ins and outs of municipal and state politics.

Another paper came out with a very interesting editorial about the dust storms in the West. It said:

For a few hundred Westerners to be choked to death with dust is a very small price to pay for wind erosion of the soil that makes necessary an expenditure of tens of millions of dollars in reparation; and which has the additional benefit of not increasing the national stores by a pound of food or a yard of cloth. It will be a magnificent expenditure of completely unremunerative labor merely to restore the West to the status it already occupied before the administration ordered the fields plowed up and left waste. It is as if God acted in coöperation with the efforts of the government at Washington and must be considered by all right-thinking Americans as one of the most statesmanlike achievements recorded in our history.

Caridius glanced at the name of the paper to see whether this was satire or serious reasoning, because it was quite impossible to tell which was which until he knew whether the particular journal he held in his hand was "pro" or "anti" administration.

A few minutes later Caridius reached and spoke at his first appointment. His address followed the lines Myerberg had laid out for him, and his thrust at Loree for selling the War Department's secret to Japan provoked prolonged and vehement applause.

On his second engagement, at the Havre docks, Caridius had a chance to show the staunch, dependable political metal of which he was built. Captain Bodeau of the *Gallie* had arranged a loudspeaker to carry Caridius' welcome address from the main saloon of the liner out to the crowd gathered

on the dock. As Caridius went aboard he observed a considerable sprinkling of dock laborers in the crowd, so he determined to delete any reference to the dock racket in his speech. Therefore, when Captain Bodeau and his officers met the congressman at the head of the gangplank and escorted him into the saloon, Caridius deserted his set speech completely and extemporized the following address:

"Captain Bodeau and officers of the *Gallic*, passengers from abroad and fellow citizens of America, I come here today as spokesman for my city, my state and my country, to welcome to our port another one of those great shuttles that move unceasingly back and forth across the green warp of the Seven Seas, weaving a tapestry of commercial advancement, scientific and artistic reciprocity, international friendship and religious unity."

There was great applause at this, and Caridius went on with his rhetorical nosegay to compliment the murals in the saloon, to point out that French genius was equally sure in designing for naval speed or ship décor.

He continued this for ten or twelve minutes, which is about as long as a crowd will listen patiently to a speaker dealing purely in froth.

When he had finished, his audience flowed through the liner admiring her great size and luxury. Captain Bodeau and his officers drank a toast with Caridius and then bowed him down the gangplank of their vessel to the dock again.

Caridius walked onto the quay still feeling the admiration of the saloon, although he knew he was now lost in the crowd on the dock. As he moved toward the street wrapped in this unobserved effulgence, he noticed a priest, a young nun and a shabby old woman standing just inside the doorway of the long warehouse of the dock. The nun in her robes, the heavy old woman in her rags were embracing and weeping while the priest stood aside looking at the two with the brooding, half-melancholy expression of his class.

As Caridius looked on, the cleric signaled a cab, placed the two women in it and then bowed them away.

Something familiar in the priest's face drew the congressman closer. The father in his turn observed Caridius and after a moment hesitated:

"Aren't you the gentleman I flew with in the plane from this city to Washington?"

Caridius felt the passing interest of meeting again a former traveling companion.

"Yes . . . and now we meet again to see the *Gallic* come in?"

"I came to receive one of her passengers," explained the priest impersonally, and after a moment added oddly, "that is how I came to recognize you . . . the coincidence of it."

"Coincidence?" repeated Caridius curiously.

"Yes . . . what we were discussing on the plane."

The congressman tried to think back.

"I don't believe I remember quite what we were discussing . . . or rather we discussed a number of things. . . ."

"Yes, of course. What I had in mind was a girl whose story I told you, and then you reappearing now, just as you have done, really forms an extraordinary coincidence."

"A girl?" questioned Caridius with an arising interest of his own. He thought back, "I remember you did mention a girl."

"Yes, the Estovia girl."

"You mean that nun I saw . . ."

The priest nodded with gratification in his ascetic face.

". . . is Paula Estovia come back."

Amazement and a breath of the romance implicit in the Catholic Church went over the congressman.

"Where did she come from?"

"Buenos Aires."

"Then you knew where she was all the time?"

"No, I wrote the Bishop of the diocese of Buenos Aires how she came to me for her last confession and, I learned later, returned to her captors. I asked him to see if he could find any trace of her. In fact, I wrote to a number of South American capitals. About two weeks ago

I received a cable from Buenos Aires informing me that Paula would return on the *Gallie*."

Amid his simple romantic astonishment Caridius sensed a far-off possibility that this might involve Canarelli again and somehow react on his own political campaign. This was indeed far-fetched, but politics is the one plane of action most sensitive to far-fetched forces. Out of these thoughts he said gravely to the priest:

"It's queer, isn't it, how chance will turn things about and work out designs. It is almost as if life were under the control of some rational force."

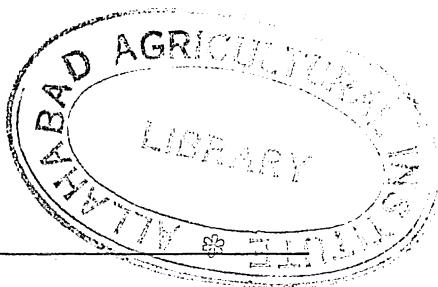
"Chance?" repeated the priest.

"Certainly, chance, fortuity, accident, luck, call it what you will."

"Ever since Paula went away I have been praying three times daily that this would come about," said the priest.

Then Caridius recalled to whom he was talking, and that the priest did have another name for the plexus of circumstances which had returned the girl to her home. And there arose in Caridius a kind of heaviness, almost a thin sickness that was always evoked by the notion of God.

43



PAULA ESTOVIA's return filled the Honorable Henry Lee Caridius with a vague disquietude. Naturally he was glad that the girl had been rescued from the blank obscenity of a South American brothel, which seemed so much worse than a North American brothel; but it was unfortunate that she

should get back just when Canarelli was trying to perform the patriotic service of electing him, Henry Caridius, to the Senate. If the press should find it out and use it as adverse publicity against Canarelli, the political reverberations might easily affect his own campaign.

At present Mr. Canarelli was doing a very patriotic and useful service. Every day he dispatched three sound wagons about the streets of Megapolis booming out praise for Caridius, the protector of American military secrets. "Vote for Caridius, Watchdog of the War Department!" the megaphones would thunder. "Vote against Sale of American Military Secrets by Plutocratic Interests!"

When Caridius heard these stentors booming in the streets, his real part in the sale of Essary's secret process to foreign powers dimmed in his mind, and it seemed to him that he had always stood foursquare against such covert and treacherous negotiations. Other sound wagons would bruit abroad the necessity of collecting the unpaid income tax from the rich, ending with the stereotyped injunction to vote for Caridius, "outer guard of internal revenue." Had it been external revenue, he would have been inner guard, naturally, for the sake of contrast and euphony.

However, the broadsides of the sound wagons filled Caridius with certain misgivings too. He wondered how they would affect Mary Littenham. He wondered if her father, in discussing the matter with Mary, would be able to point out just how all this furore would be a help to him financially.

As he thought of the girl it came to him with a sudden sense of privation that he had not seen his private secretary for many days. He had no more immediate speaking appointments, so he telephoned Myerberg that he was going to Washington and probably would not return until the following morning.

It turned out that Myerberg did have two more dates for that day and began voluble protests against his candidate's desertion, but Caridius declared that he had congressional duties to perform which took precedence over all

personal desires. So he got to the airport as quickly as he could and flew to the Capitol.

The politician really was very tired after his continuous speechmaking, and he felt something like physical thirst or hunger simply to sit in the calm of Mary Littenham's presence. His head was so full of left-over metaphors and tropes that he flew through the sky thinking that Mary was a priestess who absolved him from all weariness and rancor; her speech was a benediction, her beauty a sacrament. She was a rainbow of promise in the sky of his life. . . . These figures sounded like Congressman Bing, and Caridius wondered wearily if he lived too far north to use them in his own speeches when he referred to the ladies in the audience . . . possibly so . . . he might lose votes if he called his women listeners "rainbows of promise in the life of man."

When Caridius reached the old House office building, he nodded at the guard as he entered and walked toward his suite expecting to see in his doorway the great spotted head of Rajah staring in daylong boredom at nothing. But the door was closed; a moment later he found that it was locked.

The absence of Mary gave Caridius a deprived, cheated feeling. He had given up an important day to come to see her, and she was not in the office. He unlocked the door and entered. He found all the windows closed and the air very stuffy. There was an extra large pile of letters on the floor. The room seemed to have been unused for some time. A misgiving entered his mind. He turned and walked back to the entrance of the building.

"Has Miss Littenham been in my office today?" he asked of the guard.

"No sir."

"Did she leave any message?"

"No sir."

"Well . . . she was in the office yesterday, wasn't she?"

"I . . . don't think so, sir . . . there were some men here this morning wanting to see you, and there was nobody to receive them."

"Mm—mm . . . then she hasn't been here since day before yesterday?"

"I couldn't say that. She may have come in and gone out on a change of watch."

"But you would have noticed her if she had passed you?"

The doorman gave a brief laugh.

"She is Merritt Littenham's daughter, sir. . . . I'd notice the President if he came in."

Caridius went back to his office thinking up reasons why his secretary had not been in the office for days. He thought anxiously, with the outside of his mind, that she might be sick, but inside his mind he suppressed an apprehensive thought that his attack on her father had grown too strong even for her and she had deserted him.

He stuck very determinedly to the theory that she was ill. He went to his telephone and called up Pine Manor's number in the Megapolis suburban list. He stood for a quarter of a minute tapping his desk and staring out the window onto the driveway where he had seen the girl last.

"Hello, is this Pine Manor? . . . This is Henry Caridius. Is Miss Mary Littenham at home? . . . When will she be back? . . . Will she be back this evening? . . . Listen, I would like to leave a message to be given to her whenever she does come back. . . . Tell her to call me here in Washington, or at my office in Megapolis, or at my home in Megapolis . . . in that rotation, mind you . . . Washington first, Megapolis office second, Megapolis home last. Thank you very much. . . . Who, me? . . . I am now in my office in the old House office building at the Capitol in Washington. . . . Yes, I'll be here for an hour or two. . . . Good-bye."

Caridius put up the telephone wondering why the man in Pine Manor should have asked so particularly where he was and how long he would be there. A second thought explained it: he wanted to tell Mary where to reach him if she returned home in a short while.

He stood nodding unhappily to himself, his inner thought

now disclosed. She was not ill. Then she was angry at the political tactics he was using against her father.

The politician picked up a sheaf of letters, sat down, opened a few and read a phrase or two here and there as he framed an argument to prove to Mary Littenham that he had nothing to do with the suit filed to collect her father's income tax. He knew in his heart, that was the real reason why his private secretary had deserted him.

As he sat looking at his letters and working out his defense, his door opened and a middle-aged, inconspicuous sort of man entered. He introduced himself as a Mr. Sturgis.

"I tried to see you yesterday, but you were not in your office."

"No, I was making speeches in Megapolis."

"Were you in your office day before yesterday?"

"No, I have been in Megapolis for the last two weeks."

"Don't you leave someone in charge of your office while you are gone?"

"I thought my private secretary was here, apparently she wasn't."

"But you didn't know she was not here?"

The particular introductory word the man used here, "But," gave Caridius a momentary suspicion that something was amiss. Otherwise the man would have said, "Then" . . . "Then you did not know she was not here." Caridius studied the man intently.

"No, I thought she was here."

The caller seemed interested in this turn of the conversation.

"When did you see her last?"

"Why do you want to know?"

"Well, as a matter of fact," explained the fellow with a deprecatory smile, "I represent an office supply company. I am getting up statistics on office personnel . . . how many hours the office force put in, how much that time could be shortened by using our modern office equipment——"

Caridius made a gesture of impatience.

"I don't want any office equipment."

"I'm not trying to sell you anything, I simply want your office statistics to collate in a graph showing the thousands of years American business loses every year by failure to adopt our equipment."

Caridius gave a faint smile.

"Aren't you afraid you will run up against the administration's program of trying to make more work instead of trying to save time?"

The man smiled in his turn.

"That won't last forever. Now, when did you see Miss Littenham last?"

Caridius thought a moment.

"Do you remember the day when the news came that Mrs. Sassinet's husband had been choked to death in a dust storm out West somewhere?"

"I could find the date from the telegraph offices . . . you haven't seen her since then?"

"No, she walked out and took a cab right outside the window there and started to see Mrs. Sassinet at the Farragut Hotel."

The office supply man nodded thoughtfully.

"And where have you been during this interval?"

"So you want to know about me too?"

"If you don't mind . . . it's all a consumption of time by the office force."

"I told you I was in Megapolis."

"Whereabouts in Megapolis?"

"All over . . . I was making campaign speeches."

The man nodded again and inquired carefully:

"Do you happen to remember where you were day before yesterday at about 2:15 P.M.?"

Caridius looked at the fellow.

"Sturgis, you are not interested in office furniture, you are not even thinking about office furniture, will you tell me what the hell you're driving at?"

Mr. Sturgis smiled persuasively.

"You couldn't have been doing anything very bad that time of the day. It isn't the hour when men break loose."

As Caridius knew of no reason why he should be secretive about his speaking dates he drew from his pocket the itinerary Sol Myerberg had furnished him.

"What hour?"

"Two-fifteen."

Caridius checked through his schedule.

"I was leaving, or just about to leave, the Prince Henry Hotel on Fiftieth Street."

"And where were you going?"

"I was going to . . ." Caridius consulted his list . . . "I was going to the Havre——" Here he paused with a touch of apprehension.

"Yes . . . going to the Havre . . ." prompted Mr. Sturgis.

"To the Havre line docks," finished Caridius.

Mr. Sturgis became very interested.

"The Havre line docks in Megapolis?"

"Certainly."

"Why did you go there?"

"To make a speech of welcome to the *Gallic*."

Mr. Sturgis arose and bowed briefly.

"Thank you very much," and he started for the door.

"Oh, Mr. Sturgis," called Caridius ironically, "I will take your complete set of time-saving office equipment!"

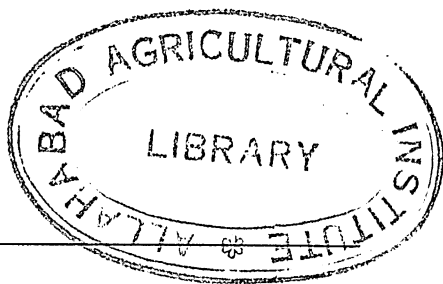
"Yes," called back Mr. Sturgis unruffled, "another man will come for your order, I am simply collecting statistical information. . . . Good-day," and he hurried away down the corridor.

The politician sat wondering why Mr. Sturgis really had come to his office when he suddenly remembered that Paula Estovia had returned to America on the *Gallic*.

A trickle of apprehension went through the congressman. His vague anxiety lest the girl be connected with Canarelli and so hooked up some way or other with his own campaign returned threefold. The man he had been talking to was

very probably a heelsman of Senator Loree, and here, he, Henry Lee Caridius, had admitted going to the ship on which Paula Estovia had returned to America. He shook his head in self-reproach. He told himself that he had been a damn fool to admit anything whatsoever to a complete stranger, when he was making a race for an office, especially where the opposition was quite unprincipled enough to start an outrageous and unfounded slander against his character on the slightest pretext.

44



THANKS TO Mary Littenham's desertion Caridius had made his trip to Washington for nothing. Still he hoped he would get a message from Mary explaining her absence. She could possibly be taking her vacation while he was away from the office.

That afternoon when he returned to Megapolis he went to the office and asked Connie Myerberg if a message had come for him.

As Connie looked through her book and shook her head Caridius was surprised that the former mental and physical sympathy between him and Connie had quite vanished since her marriage with Sol. Wifely content had made her almost of a neuter sex to other men.

"You were expecting a message, Henry, or were you just asking?" she inquired with a touch of her old lightness.

"I was expecting one."

"I'll call you the moment it comes. What office will you be in?"

"Sol's, I suppose."

"He's busy . . . tied up with a client. You'd better wait in Meltofsky's office for a while . . . or stay here."

Caridius had been assigned an office of his own in the large suite, but he entered it only when he wanted something in it. He did not care to remain in Connie's presence since her faint suggestion of invitation had vanished.

"I'll go to Meltofsky's office. If I stayed here I'd start flirting with you."

Connie smiled at him out of her inner satisfactions. She thought he was sufficiently in earnest to feel pleased.

"All right, I'll call you in Meltofsky's office."

Caridius went into the junior partner's office thinking it was impossible for Mary Littenham to desert him without a word. She had always been such an articulate sort of person.

Meltofsky sat under a green-shaded light going over a pile of bills. It was a bright spring day outside, but Meltofsky's office had no outer window and always required a lamp. As Caridius entered, the junior partner looked up, blinking his sad protruding brown eyes.

"I'm making out your preliminary expense account," he stated, tapping the papers with his pencil.

"What for?"

"To file with the election commissioner under the Corrupt Practices Act. A preliminary report goes to him just before the election and a final report ten days after the election."

"Have we spent all that on my election?" asked Caridius, astonished.

"Sure, Joe has had to hire political bosses, prize fighters, gunmen, all classes of the directive forces of our society to help keep this election straight."

"Straight?"

"Certain," offered Meltofsky as a synonym.

"Listen," ejaculated Caridius on a thought. "Perhaps I'd better not watch this. You know the only political innocence any American candidate for office can lay claim to

is to say that he really doesn't know what his friends spend on him. I'd hate to lose my innocence standing here watching you check over those bills."

A faint smile went over Meltofsky's sallow face.

"As I say, most of them are for purity of the ballot . . . money used to hire watchers, who are usually toughs, to see that the election clerks give us a straight count."

"You don't really mean straight?"

"Sure I do. We believe the people are with you. That Japanese ammunition scare you've been broadcasting we think is having its effect. In our opinion all we've got to do is to put enough gunmen around the polling places to keep the city machine from repeating, and we'll win."

"So you have to pay thugs and toughs to watch the polls?"

"Certainly, that's the way all outsiders have to beat the insiders . . . through honesty . . . militant and publicized honesty. The ring on the inside are always dishonest . . . they're in position to be so. The opposition on the outside are always honest . . . they can't help themselves for the time being."

"If you are in the midst of virtuous work there is no reason why I shouldn't see it."

"That's right, I am just picking out among these bills a few that will look good in our preliminary report to the election commissioner of how much we have spent up to date."

"All right, don't do anything wrong. Remember that honesty always wins. . . . However, I think I'll just walk on out anyway."

Just as Caridius was leaving the office Meltofsky's telephone rang. The politician made an involuntary step toward the instrument as the long-faced lawyer picked up the receiver.

"Hello," he called in his thickish voice, then more brightly, "Why hello, is that you, Miss Mary? Well, I'm glad to hear from you. . . ."

Caridius went forward holding out his hand for the receiver.

"Is it for me?" he inquired mechanically.

Meltofsky looked up at him, then placed his hand over the transmitter and shook his head while he still listened.

"No, it's the girl friend," he explained, and went on talking.

The characteristic surprise of every man that any woman can love any other man besides himself was somewhat exaggerated in Caridius' mind in regard to Meltofsky. The politician went into the reception room again, informed Mrs. Connie that he would now be with Sol in event a message came for him, then went into Myerberg's office.

Myerberg jumped up from his chair at the politician's entrance and shook a fist enthusiastically in the air.

"Caridius, we've got 'em on the run. They tell me Krauseman is spending money like water over Niagara Falls, and much good it will do them."

"You think we have public sympathy?"

"I know it, we've got the people voting for us because they want to vote. Now if we are just not too fast . . ."

"What do you mean, too fast?"

"I mean get the voters' enthusiasm up too early and give it time to die down before Election Day. You have to time your show just right to get the votes . . . it is like timing a vaudeville act to get laughs."

Caridius became serious and shifted the subject.

"Look here, Myerberg," he began gravely, "do you suppose Canarelli or some of his men have made an error?"

Myerberg himself changed to concern.

"I don't know of any . . . why?"

"Two or three hours ago a man came to my office in Washington making all sorts of inquiries which I believe centered around that Estovia girl."

Myerberg was alarmed.

"Did he come out and inquire directly about Paula Estovia?"

"No, but he did inquire precisely where I was about the time the *Gallic* came in, and of course I was down at the *Gallic*."

The Jew was nonplussed.

"What's the *Gallic* got to do with Paula Estovia?"

"Why hell, she came back on the *Gallic*!"

"Back! Back! Is she back here in Megapolis?"

"Yes, I saw her myself, her mother came to the ship to meet her."

"My God, that's a hell of a note for us! Why, they brought her back here to use her against us in this race. . . . Loree's back of that!"

"I don't believe that . . . a Catholic priest told me he sent letters to the cosmopolitans of——"

"Hell, don't you know that isn't so . . . that's a blind? Now Loree is just as sure to pull that Estovia scandal on Canarelli . . . and on you . . ."

"But now the girl's a nun."

"Bah, don't let them fool you . . . a nun . . . no . . . they are going to use her tomorrow, which is just about a day before the election . . . short enough time for the people to remember it and not enough time for us to deny any connection with it. And it's going to hurt us: people just don't like the white-slave trade. Even the men don't like it in the abstract, no matter what they practice in the concrete. I've warned Canarelli to drop that stuff . . . it was hot."

"But I tell you the girl *is* a nun!"

Myerberg pondered this.

"Well, if that's so the opposition must have got wind of her return even if they didn't engineer it. That man in your office must have been trying to dig up a skeleton and hook it onto you somehow."

"That's more like it. I wish I had never gone to that damned *Gallic*!"

"So do I."

"Well, what are we going to do about it?"

"I might tell Joe Canarelli she's back."

"No, I don't believe I'd do that."

"I think he ought at least to keep an eye on her."

"No, let her go. . . . Say, how would it do for Joe to set old Mrs. Estovia up in the syrup business again . . . something for the people to see?"

Myerberg shook his head slowly.

"No-o-o . . . a good politician never corrects a lie or makes any reparation for a wrong he has done. If he will forget them as quick as he can he may rest assured the public will do the same thing. No, the thing for us to do is to lie low and make some records for the sound wagon talking machines explaining that you are the reformer who first saved the Estovia family from the grip of the blood-sucking racketeers. The people will believe that, so don't worry your head about it."

On his way to the Albemarle Apartments that evening, Caridius disregarded Myerberg's advice and did worry his head about the Estovia affair. However, as he neared his apartment his anxiety shifted from politics to the personal matter of whether or not Mary Littenham had left any message for him with Ellora. So when he entered his apartment and found his wife, he asked, in a tone which he tried to make as casual as possible, if his secretary had sent him a telegram.

Ellora considered her husband adversely.

"Why, what sort of telegram were you expecting?"

"Well . . . I don't know where she is."

The pretty little woman blinked her eyes.

"I hope you are not excited about that."

"Well yes, it appears she has been out of the office for I don't know how long . . . several days. I don't know what correspondence she has done or what she has neglected. The office is utterly disorganized, and here I am in the middle of a race for the Senate."

Ellora studied her husband's face during these complaints.

"Henry," she said penetratingly, "that isn't all you are worried about."

The politician saw a jealous fit coming on his wife, and this piled on top of his apprehension about the Estovia girl and his uncertainty about Mary Littenham filled him with exasperation.

"Why, confound it, Ellora, what else could there be?"

"You could be in love with her! I've been suspecting that, Henry Caridius, for some time!"

Caridius caught her arm.

"Hush! Don't you fly up now!"

"Then it's true! It is true! Oh! Oh! Henry, why can't you love me, what makes you love every other woman but me?"

"Listen! Listen! Listen one minute and try to have a little sense!"

His intensity shocked her into a recess from her hysteria.

"What is there for me to listen to?"

"Don't you realize my secretary is a rich girl?"

"Yes."

"That she is probably the richest girl in America, worth hundreds of millions . . . why, she could fill this house with money!"

"Well, ye-es," admitted Ellora, wondering but more composed.

"What would a girl with that much money be doing running after a man? She has everything she wants, what does she need with a man?"

Ellora became indignant on her own account.

"You don't think women run after men just for the money they can get out of them?"

"Of course they do, what else could they want?"

"You don't mean to say I do."

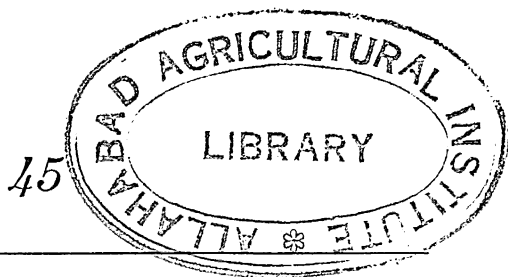
"Not you, this isn't personal, it's just about women in general. They don't want to work and they do want to spend, so they marry . . . the rest of them are like that, you are not."

"Well, honey," half apologized Ellora, "I stay here in the apartment and get to worrying about everything . . . I wonder if you love me."

"Of course I do, devotedly, passionately," assured Caridius with relief in his voice.

"If ever you don't, honey, just let me know and I'll step out of your way. I wouldn't stand for a minute between you and—and somebody you really love."

Ellora's voice was full of tenderness. She had been deeply pleased when Caridius had accused all women of being utterly mercenary . . . all but her.



N OBODY REALLY KNEW how the election was going. Ever since early morning sound wagons had moved through the rooming-house districts, the apartment-house districts, the theater district, the shopping district, the financial district, booming the treason of the munitions magnate with political repercussions on the good faith and integrity of Littenham's known henchman, Senator Loree.

Whether any of the self-centered millions in Megapolis heeded or believed or even listened to these charges nobody would know until the ballots were counted that evening. Probably not more than a third of the citizens really knew it was Election Day.

It was, however, a particularly tense Election Day. Small ratlike discomforting youths and hulky bruisers stood around the polling places, watching the voters and checking

off each one from the registration lists of their wards. When a fireman or a city hall employee voted once and returned after a decent interval to vote again, these rattish little men poked them in the bellies with the muzzles of pistols held in their coat pockets and told them to scram while they could.

One of the attempted repeaters protested. He said:

"Hell, Mickey, I'm paid to do this!"

But the gangster kept backing him away with his automatic, and the fellow gave up trying to render political service for the money he had received from Krauseman.

It was a hot election.

By the middle of the morning the *Tribune* came out with scareheads announcing that the gangsters had seized the election and it was dangerous to go to the polls; that this was the most shameful and fraudulent election ever perpetrated on the people of Megapolis. Which was simply another way of saying that the election was not going for the machine in the *Tribune's* judgment.

The Honorable Henry Lee Caridius voted for himself and then went to the Lecksher Building in a nervous jitter. What was happening over the vast city, he did not know.

Nobody knew, because only the sensational, the exceptional, the criminal of the things that happened in the city ever found their way into the newspapers, and that was all anyone knew, what the papers said.

Caridius kept watching the newspapers to see if the opposition made use of the Estovia girl's return, but he saw nothing of it, at least not at the moment.

In the Lecksher Building he found that Myerberg had one last speaking engagement for him. It was an outdoor speech at the junction of Fourth Street and Lynn Avenue. The place was near one of the polls and was chosen with the hope that if any registered voter should hear Caridius' speech, he might go to the polls and vote while the matter was on his mind.

Caridius asked his manager if the Estovia scandal had

come up for discussion anywhere. Myerberg motioned toward a great pile of papers on his desk.

"Don't find any reference to it in the morning papers. What the afternoon papers will do, I don't know. We've got to be prepared to deny everything. Now you go on down to Fourth and Lynn and give them your regular blah-blah until something new breaks loose and you are forced to answer it."

Caridius hurried down to the street again, hailed a cab and directed the driver to Fourth and Lynn. He was driven among crowded streets through the Italian district, the Ghetto, the Armenian district, Chinatown, a Swedish settlement and finally came to a park corner at Fourth and Lynn.

Here Caridius found a German band in full blast. Myerberg had sent it down to collect a crowd for his speech. The leader, a broad red-faced man who played the trumpet, asked Caridius if he wanted some music after the speaking. Caridius at first said he did not, but when he saw that the band would go away and the greater part of the crowd would follow he asked the musicians to remain.

When Caridius mounted an extemporized rostrum, a number of the crowd began to drift away. Others gathered closer to him in an effort to improve their understanding of the English language by listening to an educated man speak. Some few were interested in what he had to say. In the whole crowd there may have been perhaps a dozen registered voters. Pedestrians along the avenue would listen a few moments and pass on. The orator began:

"Ladies and gentlemen and fellow citizens of the proud city of Megapolis. It is not my intention in my contest with Senator Loree for a seat in that distinguished body of law-makers, the American Senate, it is not my intention, I say, to inject personal criticism or to rake up out of recent history the political stew which Senator Loree has cooked up in the United States Senate, and which, God knows, stinks to heaven!"

Applause here from some of the nearer listeners.

"No, I want to conduct this campaign on the high plane of logical discussion of those great principles of government about which Senator Loree and I so radically differ. I would not even stoop to mention, ladies and gentlemen, the Dock Swindle in which Senator Loree connived with Messrs. Ellis and Hays, two of the most corrupt ward heelers who ever bribed a judge, hired a gunman or licked a boot, connived with them, I say, to bribe the Board of Aldermen to sell them the lower South Street docks for fifty-one thousand dollars and allow them to turn around and sell it to the Minton Steamship Company for two hundred and eighty-seven thousand dollars, thereby mulcting your pockets, ladies and gentlemen, of two hundred and thirty-six thousand dollars, or nearly a quarter of a million. I say I will not refer to such peccadilloes on the part of Senator Loree. That is his pin money. It is a molehill among the mountains of his misdoings; it is a nervous shiver amid the earthquakes of his iniquity.

"I am not concerned here today with his brazen boodling, his shameless spoliation of office, his pitiless piracy which has disgraced, dishonored and damned Senator Loree's tenure of office from the time he started in politics, a heeler in the Eighth Ward until today, when he perches in Washington, the scavenger crow of the Senate!"

Wider applause, and in the intervals newsboys on the edge of the crowd shouted:

"All about the gunmen guarding the polls!" "All about the gangsters running today's elections!"

"Ladies and gentlemen," continued Caridius in a graver tone, "I appear before you here today concerned with affairs far more serious than that. For Senator Loree to steal your purse is nothing. Shakespeare has beautifully put it, 'He who steals my purse steals trash.' I raise a graver accusation. I point my finger toward a parricide who with heart and hand as black as the grids of hell deliberately betrays the embattled forces of America into the hands of a foreign enemy! Who stabs for gold the breast that gave him suck!

"Other men may remain silent, but I refuse to hold hugger-mugger under the cover of senatorial privilege cupidity so base or treason so ebon!

"When Senator Loree agreed to sell the secrets of the American War Department to foreign military agents to enrich himself and reënrich the munitions corporation of which he is the senatorial scullion, he steps outside the bounds of parliamentary courtesy. He enters his name on the roll of historic infamy along with Benedict Arnold, Guy Fawkes, Themistocles and Judas Iscariot! I refer to the military powder formula, owned by the American army, sold by the Rumbourg-Nordensk Company to a Japanese agent; a sale fathered in the senatorial Committee on Military Affairs by one John Q. Loree!"

Applause broke out at this period; then on the outskirts of the crowd came the chirping of newsboys followed by a spatter of laughter. Caridius disregarded the laughter and continued his abuse. The laughter increased and part of the crowd began to flow away down the avenue. Other passers-by, however, drifted in to take their places, and the speaker concluded with an injunction to go to the polls and cast their vote against that arch traitor John Q. Loree.

The orator stepped down off his rostrum, the leader of the German band, who was a good-natured fellow, threw in a smart military march for good measure and Caridius moved away among the crowd.

A number of persons, however, continued looking after him and laughing at him in a casual fashion, then Caridius heard one of the newsboys sing out:

"All about Caridius selling Military Secret! Read about Congressman Caridius . . ."

Caridius listened in amazement, went over to the urchin and bought a paper. A number of other persons had papers. A glance showed Caridius it was the *News*, which long ago had aligned itself with his campaign. He turned rather hurriedly through the pages, and opposite the editorial sheet he saw a letter from some private person in a column headed

"Voice of the People." It was a detailed account of Caridius' advocacy before the military committee in the Lower House of the sale of the War Department's powder process to a foreign country. The writer commented caustically on the great ado Caridius was making because Senator Loree had committed the same offense in the Senate.

Caridius stared at the article in amazement. The *News* always had been most friendly to him, and now for it to allow a reader to dig up this buried bone out of the Congressional Record!

He turned his back on the crowd and walked away with the reflection that very few of them could vote anyway, and that at least he was in no worse plight than Senator Loree; indeed, he stood in a little better position because Senator Loree had never dared mention the powder incident in any of his speeches, whereas he, Caridius, had attacked the matter boldly. That would be a point on his side. He hadn't tried to dodge or cover up the issue. He had met it fairly and squarely, like an honest man!

The candidate got into a taxi and started home still defending himself mentally. Then he looked out and noticed that the route his cab followed took him within two blocks of the *News* office. He directed the cabman to stop at the News Building, and a little later got out and took an elevator to the editorial offices on the tenth floor. He asked for the managing editor and soon was shown into the conventionally paper-strewn office. Caridius introduced himself and pointed out the offending article to the man at the desk.

"I don't understand this being published," said Caridius. "The *News* has always been very friendly to me. I wonder if this letter could have got in by mistake?"

The managing editor was a gray-haired man with nervous hands and an impassive face.

"No, no mistake," he replied. "It was printed, you might say, with malice aforethought; in fact, against the instructions of Mr. Littenham's secretary."

"Littenham's secretary!" ejaculated Caridius.

"Certainly, didn't you know he owned the *News*?"

"Why, I thought he owned the *Tribune*!"

"He does, but he finds it to his advantage to own both the conservative and the opposition papers here in town."

"But the *News* has always been violently opposed to the Littenham interests!"

The managing editor lifted a shaky explanatory hand.

"When the *Tribune* upholds the Littenham interests, the stocks of some of its various holdings usually advance and Mr. Littenham sells. When the *News* attacks his industries, the stocks sometimes weaken and Mr. Littenham buys them back again. Of course the reaction of the market isn't certain, but it happens often enough to make it worth his while to own both papers."

"And this letter," said Caridius, tapping his copy of the *News*, "Littenham had this letter inserted to turn the *News* gradually from my side, he didn't want to commit a journalistic volte face."

"No, not that at all. We editors here in the office wrote that and printed it over a fictitious name. We did it on our own responsibility, realizing we may get fired for it."

Caridius was astounded.

"If Littenham doesn't object, what in the hell do you men mean?"

"We meant as journalists with a shred of honor we couldn't go on with your gang, Mr. Caridius," returned the editor impassively.

"Couldn't go on with my gang? You mean me accusing Loree of something I did myself?"

"My God no . . . every politician does that."

"Then what in the hell——"

"Why, the girl, the girl!" snapped the manager in a sudden harsh voice.

"The girl . . . what girl?"

"The kidnapped girl."

Caridius put out his hand to hold to the corner of the

desk. Here was the thing he had dreaded come upon him in this queer and almost harmless fashion.

"When did you learn of her return?" he asked, wetting his lips.

"Her return?"

"Yes."

"Why, she hasn't been returned yet. Canarelli has collected a quarter of a million in gold, but he won't return her until tomorrow, after the election is over."

"Return the Estovia girl . . ."

"Hell, no, Littenham's daughter . . . Mary Littenham. We've got the story all set up waiting to let it go. . . . What's the matter, didn't you know your henchmen had——"

The editor jumped up, caught Caridius' arm with his unsteady hands.

"Wilson! Smith!" he shouted. "Somebody come in here quick! Bring a glass of whisky. This man's about to faint!"

46

WHEN CARIDIUS had left the *News* office, the man Wilson, who had brought the whisky, said to the managing editor:

"He really didn't know anything at all about that business, did he?"

The managing editor said, "Evidently not," and the two men spent a moment talking about the precautions politicians were forced to take in order to know little or nothing about their more active supporters.

On the street level below, Smith, the negro janitor, was seeing to it that Caridius got safely into a cab.

"You is sho you is feelin' all right, suh?" inquired Smith. "I kin git you some mo' whisky if you ain't."

Caridius said he was feeling all right. By that he meant that his body was going again. He directed the taxi driver to go to the Westover Trust Company. But when the motor moved off the politician realized that he had no errand at the Westover Trust Company, so he called to the chauffeur:

"Not the Westover . . . not the Westover," shaking his head.

"Where do you live, sir?" called the driver sympathetically. "Do you know your own address?"

"Take me to the Lecksher Building."

"But that's not your home, sir?"

"It's my office."

Then the taxi-man saw that his fare was not intoxicated; very sick, perhaps, but knew where he wanted to go. So he made a U-turn under a sign which forbade it, because the taxicab men had a stand-in with the police, and presently delivered Caridius at the Lecksher Building.

The politician went straight up to Sol Myerberg's private office and entered. The short powerful man looked up and ejaculated in his thickish voice:

"My God, what's the matter with you?"

"Did you know that—that Mary Littenham has been kidnaped?"

Myerberg jumped up and stood staring with his black eyes.

"No! When did this happen?"

"I don't know . . . maybe days ago."

"Who did it . . . where?"

Caridius made a sick gesture.

"Canarelli, I suppose. . . . I don't know where . . . I don't know anything about it . . . I just heard it."

The lawyer continued staring at his political principal.

"It's a damn bad break for us to hear of it right now . . . either you or me."

"Get her back! Tell him to take her back to her home!"

"My God, Caridius, I can't do it. . . . I don't dictate to Canarelli, I get him out of his holes."

"You tell him . . . take her home instantly."

"But wait . . . this is—is shocking . . . a horrible shock . . . but look at Canarelli's side . . . and your own."

"Listen," interrupted Caridius in a ghastly voice, "we were . . . in love . . . we . . . were about to live together."

"Oh . . . my God . . ." Myerberg reached a hand toward his partner. "Sit down . . . please sit down! Oi! Oi! What a mix-up!"

"Do something about it!"

Myerberg went across and pressed Caridius' shoulder to get him to sit in a chair. He made a calming gesture.

"Let me get you a drink."

"No, no, I've drunk . . . in the *News* office."

"Listen, we've got to act with . . . our very best intelligence. . . . So you learned it in a newspaper office?"

"One of the editors told me."

"How did he know it?"

"Oh, they all knew it, but they are not to print the kidnapping until tomorrow . . . after the election . . . or the girl won't be returned."

Myerberg sat down on the corner of another chair ready to leap up and help his partner.

"I see. . . . So it is bound to be Canarelli . . . damn clever . . . after the election . . . it's a great pity you ever found it out until it was all over."

"But listen, Myerberg, let's get the girl back to her home!"

"All right . . . but wait . . . can you talk dispassionately with me for five minutes?"

"Then you'll get her away from——"

"Listen, man, I can't promise anything about Canarelli. I am only his lawyer, nothing more."

"I'll see him myself, bring him up here, telephone him to come here!"

"But wait, wait, Henry, let me say two words . . . if you see Canarelli the archangel Gabriel couldn't persuade a jury that you and he didn't plan this together. Don't see him!"

"I don't give a damn about a jury or anything else, bring him up."

"And you say yourself the girl is to be released tomorrow . . . after the election! That's wisdom! It's sense. If it came out that Mary Littenham was kidnaped to get money to support you in your election you wouldn't get a damned vote!"

"Used to support me?"

"Why hell yes, Littenham had stolen from Joe nearly every dollar of ready cash Joe possessed. He brought down the federal agents and stopped Joe's racket. Joe had to have money enough to hire watchers and keep the election honest, because we all knew you would be elected if the vote was honest. Joe had to have election money or lose his whole stake. I didn't know that he was going to kidnap Mary Littenham, but now that I look at it, it was the only logical thing to do. He had to get his money out of the Westover somehow. It was his last card. Now you let this go until tomorrow. . . ."

Caridius pointed at his manager.

"Phone him up! Get him here! I want Mary Littenham back . . . at once!"

Myerberg studied his companion, then made a hopeless gesture, went across, picked up the telephone, said into it, "Get Canarelli," and came back to Caridius again. "I swear it's a terrible misfortune you ever found this out. In the old days friends of a political candidate were careful never to let him know how big a slush fund they had collected or how they used it. How much more important that is today with our modern racketeering and kidnaping. The only possible

way for America to maintain the purity of her political leadership is for candidates to know absolutely nothing of the origin of their campaign funds. Taking that into consideration, do you still want to see Joe Canarelli?"

"I would give up everything I have to get Mary Littenham out of the hands of gangsters and cutthroats!"

"But listen, she's been with them . . . a week maybe. . . . They must treat her like a queen, now ten hours longer . . . what's ten hours longer?"

"Ten! It's a million years!"

The telephone buzzed. Myerberg turned to it.

"Joe, that you? I have just learned . . . Mr. Caridius has just learned about . . . you know . . . you understand. . . . Will you come over here? . . . Why, certainly, I know it's indiscreet. . . . Sure, it's damned indiscreet, but Mr. Caridius is . . . is a wild man . . . he's not sane! . . . Why, over the girl . . ." Myerberg held the receiver a half minute longer, then put it up. "He's coming. Now if Joe will see you, you can calm down and take it easy, Henry. Because Joe is one of the biggest-hearted fellows in the world. Do anything for a friend, that's why he is where he is today. He's dependable. It's why the racketeers are finally going to control America; they're truthful and reliable. Of course, they are going to have to reform the laws, because our present type of law was drawn up by the corporation lawyers with the idea of sharp practice as the ideal, devious deceit and not honest, open robbery. . . ."

He talked on and on, trying to distract his companion's mind. Caridius followed him only occasionally. His thoughts would shoot off at tangents toward Mary Littenham. He suddenly understood why the man had come into his office in Washington trying to check up on his exact whereabouts when Mary Littenham had been kidnaped. The fellow had not been after information about Paula Estovia at all, but Mary Littenham. If the detective had only come straight out and told him he could have started helping at once . . . not at this late hour, when God only knew what hardship

or insult or even physical torture his mistress might have undergone.

There was one solitary ray in the situation. Mary had not deserted him. She had remained faithful. If ever she were returned to his arms, he now knew that he would divorce Ellora after the most conventional method of his country. He would go to Nevada and advertise it as widely as possible in order to give himself and Mary an unquestionable standing in society. Then, married to her, they would go forward to whatever peace and happiness this fitful American life contained.

The office door opened and a small black-headed man entered, smoothing his marcelled hair. Both men turned on the racketeer.

"Joe," cried the lawyer, "I would not have asked you to come here except under the greatest possible stress. Mr. Caridius here found out about Miss Littenham only an hour or so ago. He is utterly torn up. He wants her got back to her home at any sacrifice, at once. She—she is his mistress."

Canarelli looked at the politician with a dropping of his jaw.

"His mistress, my God, I didn't know that!"

"No you didn't . . . nobody did . . . nobody even suspected it . . . nobody keeps that sort of thing covered up nowadays, but listen, you'll bring her back instantly, won't you, Joe?"

"Mr. Myerberg," said the racketeer, moved perhaps for the first time in his life, "I know how Mr. Caridius feels. I know how a man loves some other woman. Yes, I understand. I was a pimp once before I became a racketeer. I know love——"

"Then you will return her at once?"

The small man made a hopeless gesture.

"Mr. Myerberg, I sent Whitey Lang to do the job. When he picked her up he could not cross the state line without getting into trouble with the federal authorities. But he could not land safely in any flying field in this state with

such a woman as that, gagged in his plane. Then he knew we could get the money out of her father without producing the girl at once on account of the election, that would be a good stall. . . ."

Both men stared at the gangster.

"You mean . . . you haven't got her?" asked Myerberg in a low voice.

"No, Whitey told me he never even looked around at her . . . was afraid he couldn't do it if he saw her . . . no, he——" The little man broke off as if staring at some invisible drama, then finished simply, "I can't bring her back because she's dead."

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OVER THE RADIO that evening the news reporter gave a three-second spot to the sentence:

"In the senatorial race Caridius beat Loree by twelve thousand six hundred and seventy-one votes. Mollison defeated Quillerby by fourteen thousand. . . . Now, ladies and gentlemen, you will listen to the further adventures of America's best-loved comedians, Gaddo and Squix, whom, you will recall, yesterday, were about to establish a dude musk ox ranch on the steppes of Siberia. . . . Mr. Gaddo is speaking. . . ." . . . "Hello, Squix. . . ."

Caridius reached out to turn the radio off. Ellora lifted a hand.

"Don't, I like Gaddo and Squix. I think they are so funny, and then maybe we'll get more election news." She looked carefully at her husband. "You don't seem at all thrilled over what you have just heard."

"Of course I'm thrilled."

"Well . . . what's wrong?"

"Why nothing . . . nothing, Ellora."

"I never heard of a person getting elected to the Senate and then looking so——" Her ancient suspicion returned.

"Henry, do you really love somebody else and nothing on earth can please you as long as I'm your wife, not even being elected to the Senate?"

The politician did not know whether or not to tell his wife that Mary Littenham was dead. The mere repetition of the words in his mind brought him a picture of the girl riding down the driveway of the Capitol grounds on an errand of sympathy to Mrs. Sassinet . . . motoring away to her death because murder was safer and more convenient than her detention.

Then he told Ellora all he knew.

The little woman was horrified.

"Why I never heard of anyone I knew being kidnaped!"

"Well . . . she was."

She sat staring wide eyed at Caridius.

"Henry . . . you . . . didn't love . . ."

The man lifted a hand with a sick feeling.

"Ellora, you . . . couldn't have even Lula, the maid, killed like that without feeling it."

"No . . . no, I couldn't. I would feel it very much. I'm a very sensitive person."

"She worked so long in my office."

"Yes, and rich too. It seems so much worse for anything to happen to a rich person, just when they have so much to enjoy. . . . You don't know how they killed her?"

"No . . . no . . . I think I'll go to bed."

"You must feel bad, go get a good night's rest."

He kissed her mechanically, went to his bedroom and closed the door. He sat for a long time in the chair, removing parts of his clothing when he thought of it. Presently, through the closed shutter the patter of Gaddo and Squix

started up again. Their string of imbecilities touched Caridius with a feeling of nausea.

On the following morning the newspapers were given over to the kidnaping of Mary Littenham. Under a page-wide streamer, "Daughter of Merritt Littenham Kidnaped," there were half-a-dozen stories giving different phases of the crime.

A quarter of a million dollars in gold had been paid to the gangsters. It had been delivered to two large airplanes in a vacant field, to what destination no one knew. The return of Mary Littenham to Pine Manor that morning at ten o'clock had been promised. A crowd, so the paper stated, already had begun flowing out of the city to see the return of the heiress.

Another article bore the subhead, "Jeffrey Littenham Sees Sister Kidnaped."

Jeffrey Littenham, brother of the abducted girl, was entertaining a group of friends on the terrace at Pine Manor when the tragedy occurred. The party saw an airplane alight in an open fairway beyond an ornamental Greek peristyle. At the distance the cocktail party on the terrace thought it was some guests arriving by airplane and waited for them to come to the house. Jeffrey Littenham, brother of the missing girl, finally looked at the plane through binoculars and saw his sister and her great Dane, Rajah, emerge from the pinetum. The girl approached the plane and apparently talked for a moment with the aviators. Then she ran back toward her dog. The two men seemed to hesitate to approach her with her huge Dane at her side. However, they did come up cautiously. The enormous dog simply stood while the two miscreants struck the girl, apparently with a pistol, knocked her to the ground and carried her to the plane.

By this time all of Pine Manor was aroused. Servants, guests, family rushed to her rescue, but the plane got in the air before anyone could reach the scene of the tragedy.

The kidnapers evidently had studied the habits of Miss

Littenham and had timed the arrival of their plane to coincide with the girl's return from her work in Washington.

Another brief article stated that one Whitey Lang, a notorious gangster and expert aviator, had been arrested by the city police as a suspect of the crime but had been immediately released on bail, Myerberg, Meltofsky, Koch and Grannan, attorneys, acting for the defendant.

A later edition of the paper reported that Miss Littenham had not been returned at 10 A.M. The crowd waited until twelve noon and then departed. The noon edition carried the streamer, "Millionaire Heiress Not Yet Returned by Kidnapers. Money Magnate Merritt Littenham Gives Up Hope for Return of Missing Daughter."

The four o'clock edition carried new scareheads.

"Body of Millionaire Heiress Found Crushed in Mountains Near Western Border of State. Believed to Have Been Hurlled Out of Kidnap Plane."

Each of these hourly editions sold hundreds of thousands of extra copies in Megapolis and throughout the entire United States.

The legal and parliamentary trials and the newspaper furore about them were mercifully dimmed and softened for Henry Caridius by the gray veil of Mary Littenham's death. That tragedy overlay all his acts and all his subsequent wounds.

When Ellora asked uneasily for the reason of his continued depression, he told her that he was afraid the catastrophe would affect his career in the Senate. Later, as he tried to escape the circle of his thoughts by walking to his office, he was deluged afresh with the crime from its very beginning to its end by a great rack of out-of-town papers, all bearing various dates. Then he saw a great number of the headlines bore his own name but always duly guarded against legal action by the word "alleged."

"New Senator Caridius Alleged Accessory in Ransom Extortion."

"Caridius Alleged Co-Plotter Against Own Secretary."

"Senator-elect Caridius Alleged Fiend in Littenham Heiress Murder."

Caridius stood staring up at the board of papers trying to gauge this far-reaching and disastrous publicity. As a politician this was his end. Also as a lawyer his career was run. He wondered what he was going to do. He had been elected to the Senate. . . .

Automatically he walked on down to the law office in the Lecksher Building and went up to the fifteenth floor. He found the waiting room crowded with bailors. A dozen or so shabbily but carefully dressed hangers-on had been assembled to go through the form of making bail for any of the gangsters who might be arrested by the state constabulary or the city police.

The whole office wore the alert professional air of an establishment in the full swing of serious and important duty. As Caridius entered, Sol Myerberg stepped into the waiting room from his private office. The short powerful lawyer made a gesture at half a row of these men.

"You fellows go on down to Judge Pfeifferman's court and sign Whitey Lang's bond. The city cops have had to pick him up this time."

Six of the stool bailors arose and shuffled out of the office toward the elevators.

Myerberg shook his head at Caridius.

"Bad business! Bad business! We are like an army in the midst of battle. This is what we prepare for and train for, but we know it's bad business to let things come to this. It is that instinct, that feeling that is the basis of civilization. Come into the office. I've got something to show you."

Caridius went in without reply. As Myerberg followed and shut the door he offered anxiously:

"Let me get you a drink, make you feel a little better. . . ."

"No, I don't want anything."

The criminal lawyer hesitated, then motioned toward his table stacked high with newspapers.

"Look at 'em. I bought 'em on the way to the office this morning. They are all harpooning you. You are the biggest game in sight."

"Yes, I noticed the headlines coming down here."

"But you haven't read 'em?"

"I have just glanced at them."

"Well, there's a clamor all over the country to make abduction a federal crime."

"Yes, I see they would advocate that. . . . Whitey and Joe Canarelli are not in the slightest danger from the state and city authorities, are they?"

"No, they are not."

"Then it is very natural for everyone to want to make abduction a federal offense."

Myerberg shook his finger at his political principal.

"Yes, but that is a desertion of the principle of states' rights."

"But if states' rights won't work!" cried Caridius hopelessly.

"That's all right . . . the idea will go out of fashion but it will come back in again. You defend it now, and when it swings back you'll be at the top of the heap!"

"I couldn't possibly do that, when already they are accusing me of complicity . . . half the papers are 'alleging' charges against me."

"Wait, stop, hold on a moment." The lawyer stood thinking. "You first learned of the tragedy in the *News* office, didn't you?"

"Yes, I did."

"Who told you over there?"

"One of the editors."

"That's good . . . very good. Let us go over to the *News* office." He picked up his hat.

"What for?"

"We want the *News* to stay on your side of this matter. It knows you are innocent. Knowing that, it could defend your theory of states' rights. You see, if we don't get some

newspapers on your side Congress will be forced into ouster proceedings against you. If there is any way to block this adverse publicity——”

“I don’t think I would care.”

“Yes, but think of your supporters, the people who looked up to you and voted for you. They did it without pay. Your campaign produced the first quiver of public interest in years. Come on, let’s go over to the *News* office and see what we can do.”

“Well, all right, it makes no difference to me one way or the other. When——” He broke off. He had thought that when Mary Littenham died the real reason for his career in Congress had ended. “Come on, let’s go,” he agreed in a gray voice, and the two men left the office.

When they reached the News Building, Caridius inquired for Smith, the negro who had helped him to a cab. The politician asked Smith to take him to the editor to whom he had talked on the day of his visit to the *News*. Smith conducted the callers into the office of a Mr. Henderson.

The editor appraised his visitors with impassive eyes and asked them to be seated.

“We came to see you, Mr. Henderson,” explained Myerberg, “because, as far as I know, you are the only man in a position to right a very great wrong that is being done Mr. Caridius.”

“How is that?” asked the editor, with neither encouragement nor discouragement in his voice.

“You broke the news of the kidnaping to Mr. Caridius, didn’t you?”

“Did I?”

Caridius was taken aback.

“Didn’t my actions and words give you that impression?”

“You appeared moved. I thought at the time you were about to faint,” conceded the editor.

“Well, if it was such a shock and surprise,” suggested Myerberg, “wouldn’t you conclude that your news was the first he had heard about it?”

"I know it was a shock to Mr. Caridius," he agreed, withholding the element of surprise.

"Mr. Henderson," began Myerberg formally, "you are in a position to refute the present disastrous publicity that is bracketing Mr. Caridius' name with the kidnaping and murder of his secretary. It would be a piece of the simplest justice to testify to an innocence of which you have private knowledge."

Mr. Henderson sat thinking for some minutes.

"You realize my private knowledge as an individual doesn't color the news and editorial policies of this paper; in fact, it has nothing to do with them."

"I realize that now."

"In event an effort is made to prevent Mr. Caridius from taking his seat in the Senate, my private knowledge would be at Mr. Caridius' disposal before the investigating committee."

"I see," nodded Myerberg with a twist of his thick Jewish lips. "There is one more point I would like to speak about. You have seen in the papers from all over the country, the almost universal demand that the federal government take over primary jurisdiction in kidnaping cases."

"Yes, that's true?" agreed Mr. Henderson in a questioning tone.

"Don't you feel that any paring away of the sovereignty of the states is a contradiction to the spirit of the American union?"

"Our state police system has broken down under the strain of political corruption."

"That's true, but the remedy is to restore state government, not to destroy it. The states, in a way, are buffers to the federal government. The very detachment of our federal government has given it a modicum of freedom from the immediate and intimate filth and sewage of state governments. The central government is designed as an arbiter and purger of the state organizations, not as their substitute.

"The only way such a vast country as ours can preserve

itself from a huge, unresponsive and perhaps corrupt bureaucracy is to preserve our separate state governments, each adapted to its own people and their particular necessities."

A faint smile touched Mr. Henderson's impassive face.

"Mr. Myerberg, aren't you attorney for Joe Canarelli?"

"Yes."

"Isn't your plea for a retention of state sovereignty something in the nature of a rationalization?"

"Every suit before every bar is an effort to adapt the prevailing law to its own uses. That is as altruistic and patriotic a view as lawyers ever achieve. But the newspaper, Mr. Henderson, is a free moral agent with no cause to defend."

Mr. Henderson made a negative gesture with his finger.

"The press a free moral agent with no cause to defend . . ." and he was moved to laughter.

48

VERY GRADUALLY the newspaper explosion all over the United States died away in rumblings of scandal and indignation against the senator-elect.

Every day the Honorable Henry Lee Caridius went to the out-of-town newspaper stand and with a slow rebirth of hope noted the dwindling of the uproar against him.

During the storm even the optimistic Myerberg had been disturbed and thoughtful, but as advancing spring warmed the Jew's oriental blood, the short stout fellow resumed once more his sparkling, realistic attitude toward affairs.

One day Caridius entered the law office in the Lecksher

Building to discuss with Myerberg at what time he would best present himself for admission to the Senate. When he saw his partner, however, he found him quite changed. He was reading a crisp-looking legal document. He spread it out on the desk and beckoned to Caridius with something grave and monitory in the gesture.

"Well . . . it's come," he said, drawing a long breath, then he read:

"'Notice from the Special Committee on Investigation of Senatorial Campaign Expenditures. . . .'" Myerberg frowned as he studied the document. "That's an odd turn, 'Campaign Expenditures.'"

"It doesn't say anything about . . . anything else?" inquired Caridius.

"No, here is a copy of the petition and notice for you to appear before the Special Committee and answer to its complaints."

Caridius took the notice and read:

To the Senate of the United States:

Comes now Merritt Littenham of Megapolis, the petitioner who gives notice of his intention to contest and does hereby enter and file a contest of the election of Henry Lee Caridius as Senator to succeed the Honorable John Q. Loree. And he requests an investigation of the unlawful uses by the said Henry Lee Caridius, and by his agents and representatives of large sums of money to influence the election and also cases of undue influence and intimidation of the voters at the election.

"He doesn't mention anything at all about—about Miss Littenham," observed Caridius.

"No, he probably was wise."

"What do you mean?"

"His daughter was very close to him, was she not?"

"That was my impression."

"She probably told him of . . . your mutual relations."

So he leaves all criminal implications out of his count entirely."

Caridius had never before thought of this possibility. Somehow it relieved some inward strain to think that the owner of half the papers that had been attacking him for complicity in Mary Littenham's death knew in his heart that there were no grounds for such an accusation. It gave him a faint hope that justice would arise out of somewhere and clear his name.

"Have you a friend in Congress?" inquired Myerberg.

Caridius pondered. As a member of the House from Megapolis, he had had very little to do with his fellow representatives. Megapolitan congressmen never associated with the ordinary kitchen-garden congressmen from the provinces and outlying states.

"What will I want . . . with a friend?" asked Caridius.

Myerberg looked at his partner.

"If your forbears had undergone the racial history of us Jews, you wouldn't ask a question like that. What you need one for right now is to be your counsel at this investigation."

"Oh well," said Caridius, "I have half-a-dozen colleagues who will do that much for me."

"It would be much better to have a fellow congressman to defend you than an outside lawyer. It would look as if the House you were leaving had confidence in you."

"Certainly, of course they have."

"All right, take this notice, go down to Washington and make arrangements with one of your friends to represent you."

Caridius set out on his errand pondering which one of his friends he would approach. They moved past his mind in review: Congressman Orton, representative of the munitions company in his own state, who never could find an anti-war bill framed strongly enough for him to vote for it; Winton, the chill Mr. Winton on the Committee on Committees; Congressman Davies, Congressman Dabney. Caridius' friends

were like a rainbow, a resplendent host covering his whole horizon, but when he approached them, they remained on the horizon.

And finally, by process of elimination, the absurd and semigrotesque Honorable Josiah Bing came before his scrutiny. Caridius wondered if Bing would do. There was a certain solid factuality about Bing and an ability to express himself in picturesque bombast, which served excellently on the stump in the South, but which was not designed for a hearing before the United States Senate. Still, Bing was the essence of good-nature, and Caridius had a feeling that his counsel would be wise if prolix.

When he reached Washington, Caridius set out for the Honorable Josiah Bing's office on the third floor of the old House office building. On his way up, Caridius passed the door of his own former suite. As he glanced at it he instinctively expected to see the great spotted head of Rajah lying across its threshold. Then the unhappy thought came to him that if the blue-ribbon winner had been a simple mongrel, with a mongrel's fidelity, it might have defended Mary Littenham in the tragedy that overtook her.

And as he walked on to the elevator Rajah became a kind of symbol of the banks, the corporations, the munitions company, of the rich and powerful in America, lying supine, while the hundreds of millions of Americans . . . the lines of an old poem floated through his head . . . "are here as on a darkling plain swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight, where ignorant armies clash by night" . . . ignorant armies. . . .

When Caridius entered Mr. Bing's office the big heavy congressman got up from his desk.

"Well, well, Mr. Caridius . . . Senator Caridius, I should say . . . allow me to offer my congratulations."

"Thank you very much. . . . I came up to have a talk with you."

"Yes, certainly." The big man turned to his stenographer. "Oscar . . . Senator Caridius, this is Oscar, my

sister-in-law's brother . . . Oscar, be sure and get off letters to all the births and deaths in the Steuben and Elder County papers today. We have got to keep right up with our work here in Congress. Aye me, Senator, I wish I had a little leisure to study the great momentous questions of the times. But as I have often said, a congressman's first duty is to his constituents. He must devote his every energy to keep their choice in office."

By this time Mr. Bing had led Caridius into a private room and now indicated a chair with an elaborate Southern gesture.

"Senator, I am entirely at your disposal."

"I'm not seated as a senator yet," pointed out Caridius.

"No, but that's a matter of form."

"No, it isn't just form. In fact, that is why I came up here to see you."

Mr. Bing lifted his bushy brows.

"I am surprised, Senator."

"So am I, but just today, I received a formal notice from the chairman of a special committee which has been appointed to investigate my election."

Mr. Bing cleared his throat.

"Well, I am sure there is—hem—nothing to fear in a—hem—free, open, candid examination of the unsullied record of an—hem—honorable man like yourself, Senator."

"Why no, there isn't," agreed Caridius slowly. "It's a money charge, too much money spent on my election, when as a matter of fact the money my side spent was as nothing compared to what Loree spent."

"That's gratifying, that's deeply gratifying to me, Senator."

"But . . . have you read the papers?"

"Naturally."

"The unfortunate connection of my name with the tragedy that befell my secretary, a girl for whom I felt a— a sincere admiration and attachment, that will certainly color the simple charge of election bribery against me."

"Mm—mm, I am sure that will be dissipated if the matter should ever come to an investigation."

"Yes, I know it will, but it would have to be touched upon in passing. And I was just casting about in my thoughts for some colleague here in the house who would represent me in this investigation. . . ."

Mr. Bing opened his slit-like eyes in astonishment.

"You are not considering me?"

"As a matter of fact, I was."

"I am surprised, but—hem—honored. May I ask you why you have accorded me so great a compliment?"

"Well, I know you more intimately than any other member of the house. I know you must have observed the friendly relation between me and . . . my secretary. I felt that your certainty that I had nothing whatever to do with Miss Littenham's horrible death, would make itself felt in the investigation."

"Yes, of course, I do know that very thoroughly."

"And you have courtliness, if I may be personal, a Southern courtliness and a command of eloquence and pathos."

"Hem! Hem!"

"And your constituents are some distance from Washington. You wouldn't be likely to injure yourself supporting my cause."

The Honorable Josiah Bing sat looking at Caridius, nodding his large head slowly. Now he lifted his voice:

"Oscar! Oh, Oscar, bring me the Caridius file of letters and telegrams."

Caridius stared.

"The what?"

"Letters and telegrams," repeated Mr. Bing in a conversational tone.

The youth Oscar appeared with a wastebasket full of white and yellow envelopes, placed them on the table and retired. Mr. Bing picked up a sheaf and handed them to Caridius. They were letters and telegrams from all over Mr.

Bing's state urging the congressman to use his influence to oust Henry Lee Caridius, the alleged gangster, the alleged kidnaper, the alleged blackmailer and murderer, from his seat in the United States Senate.

Caridius opened half-a-dozen in bewilderment. Each repeated the same message word for word.

"Somebody is behind all this!" he ejaculated.

"Certainly, that is clear."

"Why, this is the most unbelievable thing I can imagine Loree's doing!"

"Senator Caridius, it is never the politician himself who commits an offense like this. It is his supporters who do it behind his back, unbeknownst to their candidate. Now for instance the boodle they are going to accuse you of using in your election . . . you didn't use that boodle. You didn't have a thing in the world to do with it. Your henchmen, enthusiastic but misguided, may have spent something on your election, but you . . . no . . . not a cent. Now it is the same way with Loree and these telegrams. Senator Loree is an innocent man."

"Then who did it?"

"Why, that is the technique of the utility companies. They take the names out of the telephone books and send off messages to us congressmen, and it just happens that a great many utilities belong to the Littenham interests and so are on Senator Loree's side of this argument."

Caridius looked at the basketful of letters again. The ingenuity of his ousting was appalling. His enemies would make a public outcry against an atrocious crime and allow the Senate to respond by denying him a seat on a conventional charge.

"What would you advise me to do?" he asked earnestly.

"If I should advise you, young man, excuse me, but I am older than you, if I should advise you, Senator, I would say, don't swim against the current."

"What would you mean?"

"I mean the current of public opinion is against you now.

No counsel in human form can save your seat in the Senate, but . . . mark this . . . you can dramatize yourself."

"How?"

"By accepting no counsel. Be a lone warrior standing foursquare against malicious persecution and plutocratic greed. It will finally develop into an appealing and a heroic rôle. Then there is bound to come a backwash, and you will become as violently popular as you are now violently unpopular. That's the way the American people act, Senator Caridius."

Mr. Bing arose, patted his caller fraternally on the shoulder and with much ceremony escorted him out of the office.

Whether or not all this had been rationalization on Mr. Bing's part to escape from being involved in the case, Caridius was not sure. But his ideas were not without a certain validity.

As the senator-elect moved away from the old House office building down the driveway, his political apprehensions faded away in the memory of the dead girl whom he had seen last under these trees. He looked across the Capitol grounds at the curve of the great dome against white rolling spring clouds and a pale spring sky. All the flowering trees had shed their blooms save a last horse chestnut lifting pale funeral candles amid its green gloom.

Caridius stood looking at the scene when a woman who had stopped near him broke in on his thoughts:

"Why, Mr. Lynch, I didn't expect to meet you here."

The senator-elect glanced around to see who the woman was talking to. They were alone. He did not understand why she called him "Mr. Lynch," but as she was looking familiarly at him he replied lifelessly:

"You didn't expect to find me here?"

"No, people who work in Washington so seldom walk up on the Capitol grounds . . . you must not work up here?"

"Well, I have worked here."

"Oh, you have, and where does your niece work?"

"My niece?"

The woman looked at him oddly.

"Yes, your niece that was remodeling three of my rooms, putting in a bath and a grille and new furniture." The woman slapped a hand over her mouth. "Oh, maybe I told something I oughtn't to have told! Maybe she was trying to keep it a secret from you. I thought of course you was paying for it."

Before Caridius' eyes the woman seemed to swing with the imperceptible motion of memory and come to rest in a boarding house on Jay Street. He could not recall her name.

"No, there is no harm done. I knew she was fixing up the suite."

"Well, I'm glad I didn't give nothing away. When will you and your niece move in, Mr. Lynch?"

Caridius stood in silence until the woman, evidently thinking him a little deaf, asked in a louder tone:

"When will you and your niece move in, Mr. Lynch?"

"Why-y . . . my niece has gone away."

"Gone away!"

Caridius nodded with suddenly smarting eyes.

"Yes."

"But she's coming back."

The man shook his head slightly in silence.

"But you are coming . . . ever'thing's all fixed. It's mighty nice. It really is. It's the purtiest got up suite of rooms I ever saw in all my life."

"No, I won't be able to come either," said Caridius, composing himself.

The landlady's sympathy was moved at her tenant's evident distress.

"Aye me," she sighed, shaking her head, "I could have told you-all not to go fixing up any rooms if you held appointive jobs. There is no telling when you're going to lose an appointive job. Now if you-all had been civil service people it would have been different, but . . . as it is . . . well, I sure am sorry for you both."

49

ON SECOND THOUGHT Henry Caridius disregarded the advice of the Honorable Josiah Bing and canvassed among his friends in the House for a counsel in the approaching senatorial investigation, but unfortunately none of them were able to take the post.

The harassed senator-elect even thought of Sol Myerberg as his legal adviser, which selection no doubt would have been the most impolitic he could have made, but happily, at the time of the investigation, Myerberg was in Canada defending one of the most widely publicized lawsuits of the decade. He was defending Joe Canarelli's title to the quarter of a million dollars in gold which had been deposited to the racketeer's credit in a Montreal bank.

The suit was an action instituted by Merritt Littenham to regain possession of the money which he had paid the kidnaper for the return of his daughter. Littenham's bill of complaint before the court held the usual counts: unfulfilled performance of contract, obtaining money under false representation, blackmail, illegal transportation of gold from the United States into Canada.

To the first, second and third of these counts Myerberg demurred on the ground that the Westover bank owed a quarter of a million dollars in gold to Joe Canarelli, that the said Canarelli had applied to the bank for this money and had been refused. To the last count, the illegal expor-

tation of gold from America into Canada, Myerberg moved that this be quashed on the ground that the suit was before a Canadian court, without power to execute American fiscal laws, and that such a law, viewed from the Canadian standpoint, was against public policy. This motion to quash was sustained and the final count stricken from the record.

The attorneys for the plaintiff made a vigorous, a highly involved and technical effort to prove that Merritt Littenham who paid the ransom money to Canarelli was not the Westover bank with which the racketeer had made his original deposits. The complainant went on further and averred that the transfer of the money to the holding company formed within the bank still further cut off and removed Merritt Littenham from any connection with and responsibility for the payment of said money to the said Joe Canarelli.

Myerberg demurred to this by pointing out that the holding company was Merritt Littenham.

The lawyers for the plaintiff then pleaded that a bank or a corporation's avoidance of responsibility for deposits received by transferring said deposits to a holding fund formed within the bank itself was one of the fundamental principles of American corporate law. And, they pleaded, since the action had arisen in America, American law should prevail.

The Canadian judges' final decision on this point was very puzzling to the American corporation lawyers who appeared before the court in Merritt Littenham's behalf. The verdict read:

"In rendering their judgment in this action, the bench has taken into consideration the fact that this is, strictly speaking, an American litigation transferred to Canadian courts and the ancient rule that the laws of a country in which a contract or an action originated should be applied to the settlement of such a cause. This legal principle is one of the foundations of international comity.

"But in this especial case, however, the bench will be

guided not so much by abstract legal reasoning as by precedent long established in Americo-Canadian litigation. The court cites the case of *Cyrus M. Brown vs. Digger Brown* 49 C. L. R. 1850: pp. 560-73.

"In this action, Cyrus Brown, a white man, brought suit for the return of his slave, Digger Brown, a negro who had escaped from the United States into Canada. The ruling in that case read as follows, 'This court holds that when any slave reaches a land under the flag of England, he automatically becomes free from the legal trammels and hindrances and devices that withhold from freemen their inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.'

"Since this bench holds and considers that the right to confiscate a man's wealth by legal devices is an analogy of the right to confiscate the man himself, it is forced to hold, under English law, that the monies which are the subject of this action, shall remain in the possession of their owner, Joe Canarelli, the defendant. And it is so ordered."

This Canadian decision aroused a profound antagonism throughout the American press and American financial circles. The *New York Gazette*, in a leading editorial, labeled it, "a Canadian scheme to attract American capital." The *Army and Navy Review* characterized the decision as a "low, cowardly counter attack on the part of the Canadian government to revenge the recent American threat to fortify the Canadian border." The *Wall Street Recorder* stated that "this decision is a fatal wound to the financial set-up of America and we suggest it should be appealed to the World Court at Geneva."

The *Megapolis Tribune* came out flatfooted for a declaration of war, or at the least a complete fortification of the Canadian boundary with military bases so closely peppered that the influx of American gold into Canada, even by airplanes, would be impossible.

The thought behind this editorial was, of course, that by the time the boundary line was fortified the Littenham inter-

ests would have recouped their half million in gold many times over and could charge this deficit to advertising.

But at any rate, owing to this Canadian diversion, Caridius found it impossible to obtain Sol Myerberg as his counsel before the Senatorial Investigating Committee.

The senator-elect's actual appearance before the Special Committee on Investigation of Senatorial Campaign Expenditures occurred in a chamber of the Senate office building which lies to the northward of the Capitol. The whole scene wore a dignity that befitted a high state investigation. The window of the chamber opened on the domed Capitol with its terraced grounds. The chamber itself was a large severe room with a long table in the center around which sat the Committee and the witnesses for the petitioner.

Caridius was surprised to see among these witnesses old Mr. Krauseman, the police sergeant, Dennis O'Sheen and Magistrate Pfeifferman. All these men were Loree's henchmen, and Caridius wondered if they meant to utter testimony made out of whole cloth in order to unseat him in the Senate.

When Caridius first came in there was a moment of awkward silence, as none of the Committee knew him personally. This, however, was eased by old man Heinrich Krauseman introducing him to the senators, all of whom he seemed to know intimately.

One of the strangers at the table proved to be the chairman of the election board in Caridius' own state. He was the first witness examined, and produced the report of election expenses as turned in by Meltofsky. This document was certified and passed around the table. The chairman of the Committee then began with Heinrich Krauseman and asked him if he had handled any Caridius money. He said he had not. The chairman then asked Krauseman if he knew how much Caridius money had been spent on the election. Here Krauseman produced a long list of names and amounts. This list comprised election officers, firemen, the police force,

members of the City Hall staff from the Mayor's office force to the street-cleaning department.

Asked how he had obtained these figures, the political boss said he had obtained them from the men themselves and that they were present and were prepared to testify to the truthfulness and correctness of the list.

The chairman of the Investigating Committee then asked:

"But you did not pay out these amounts yourself?"

"No, I did not. I was not handling Caridius money that election."

"But these amounts were mentioned to you by these different persons as amounts received by them to vote for Henry Caridius?"

"That is correct," nodded the old political boss.

"You may take the witness, Mr. Caridius," said the chairman of the Committee.

The senator-elect looked at the old man's honest kindly face.

"Mr. Krauseman, why did these various persons tell you that they had received these amounts of money to vote for me in the last election?"

"I asked them what they were paid to vote for you."

"Why did you ask such a question?"

"I wanted to see how much I would have to pay them to change their vote for Senator Loree."

"And did you pay them something to change their votes?"

"Yes I did."

"How much?"

"I paid them on the average about three times as much as Myerberg paid them."

This caused a sensation around the table. The chairman tapped for quiet. Caridius continued:

"Mr. Krauseman, why were you forced to pay these witnesses three times as much to vote for Loree as Myerberg had paid them to vote for me?"

"Well, all the boys wanted to do what was right, and we figured it out and decided that was right."

"Now tell us how you and the boys arrived at this feeling of equity when you paid them three times what Myerberg had paid them to vote for me?"

"Why, it was like this. You see your speeches about the munitions company selling a military secret to a foreign power had the boys all stirred up and they were going to vote for you anyway. Then Myerberg paid them the usual price to vote for you. The boys figured that made two prices, and I agreed with 'em. So I had to meet those two prices to even things off and then pay them again to vote for Loree."

Here the chairman tapped the table to rule that this was immaterial evidence and for the stenographer to delete it from the record.

"But wait, Mr. Chairman," prayed Caridius, "I believe with a few more questions I can show this evidence possesses materiality."

"Very well, Mr. Caridius, you may proceed with your questioning and we will then determine the materiality of the evidence you elicit."

Thus heartened the senator-elect proceeded:

"Mr. Krauseman, did these voters whom you paid actually vote for Loree?"

"They did."

"How do you know they did?"

"Because a check-up showed that they were the only votes Senator Loree received in the whole election."

"Do you mean to say that every vote which Myerberg bought with Caridius money actually was voted for Loree?"

"Every vote Myerberg thought he bought with Caridius money was actually voted for Loree."

"Precisely, I stand corrected, thought he bought. Then can you explain to me and the Committee why the election went so overwhelmingly for Caridius?"

"Well, you see, droves of outsiders who have nothing to do with politics——"

"What do you mean by nothing to do with politics?"

"I mean they have no standing in politics, they don't belong to any organization, they're outsiders."

"I see, go ahead."

"Droves of these people got all worked up over this War Department scare and rushed in and elected you."

"So it was the unpaid-for vote that elected me?"

"Yes, sure. You really needn't have paid a cent, you would have got elected for nothing if you had just sat still. It surprised everybody but me. I saw a long time ago that you had personality."

Caridius turned to the chairman.

"Mr. Chairman, taking the answers of these additional questions in connection with the foregoing which were ordered deleted, I submit the whole for your decision on their admissibility."

The chairman shook his head gravely and thoughtfully.

"Mr. Caridius, I will agree that sentiment, which often counterfeits a specious form of logic, suggests that I permit you your additional questions. Unhappily the whole group of questions you have propounded has no bearing whatsoever on the charges made against you in this investigation. The question is, did you or your agents return a false account of the election expenditures made in your senatorial race? The answer to that question is, yes. The surroundings, the circumstances of those unlisted expenses cannot be gone into. It simply stands as a fact."

"But, Mr. Chairman, as a great boon, will you permit me to ask the witness one more question?"

"You may. What is it?"

"I want to ask Mr. Krauseman if he has handled the funds for many campaigns."

"Mr. Krauseman, you may answer."

"I have, your honor, for the last twenty-five years."

"Now, Mr. Krauseman," proceeded Caridius, "did you ever in your whole political career, did you ever know, or hear, of any politician who filed a true account of his campaign expenses with the state election commissioner?"

"I never did," began the old man.

"Immaterial! Immaterial!" ruled the chair. "We are not investigating election irregularities in the past but in the present. Mr. Stenographer, I will ask you to omit all of the foregoing questions and answers in your record. Now, Mr. Caridius, if you have any questions designed to prove the truth or falsity of Mr. Krauseman's testimony, such will be acceptable, but do not press your inquiry as to what other political bribery took place, past or present. Another's bribery will not excuse your own."

Caridius arose. He was shocked at the harshness of the chair's rulings.

"Mr. Chairman," he began in bewilderment, "are you aware that if proceedings similar to this were brought against every congressman and senator in Washington we would all stand shorn of our offices? The very witnesses you have brought up against me prove that I was elected by the unconstrained and unpaid-for vote of Megapolis. Loree received the vote of the regular machine, but I——"

The chairman tapped him down.

"Mr. Caridius, the Committee and I wish we could listen to you on this point which you present with such eloquence and sincerity. Your point, unhappily, has nothing to do with the issue, whether or not your expense account was false or true. Your whole address, your attitude, your argument admit that account was false.

"This committee will be forced as patriotic representatives of the American people so to make our report to the Senate of the United States."

On this key the Investigating Committee adjourned.

Caridius walked out of the Senate office building alone.

As he signaled a cab he knew that in this investigation he had been mutely convicted of having some part in the death of Mary Littenham. The particularization of the charge against him prevented him from offering evidence to clear himself of the general cloud of guilt under which he was convicted.

Presently his mind deserted the whole question of his trial, and he rode on thinking of Mary Littenham.

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DURING THE HELPLESS hopeless period of his expulsion from the United States Senate Henry Caridius received an odd semi-effective comfort from Ellora, his wife. Her weepings, reproaches and bitter complaints required endless sympathy and that poor thin salve of philosophy with which men essay to bind up the wounds of their souls. In comforting her over and over he comforted himself for whatever that comfort was worth.

When Ellora flung her reproaches at the cruelty and injustice of the world in connecting her husband with Mary Littenham's murder, Caridius would explain the inevitability of such newspaper speculation since his political corruption fund had been derived from her ransom. Then when she turned and upbraided her husband for receiving political aid from the underworld the unhappy man would explain that someone had to contribute to the expenses of a candidate's campaign. And the only persons who could be expected to make such heavy outlays would be corporations or the very rich, who could expect to get their money back in special legislation and governmental favors; or the underworld who stood in dangerous places before the law and who would receive their recompense in a nonenforcement of the law in favor of their crimes and extortions. Such reasonings had to be repeated over and over, because each new outbreak of anger would remove them completely from Ellora's mind.

But the repetition at least brought a recess to Caridius from that endless retrospective planning in his own thoughts as to how he might have prevented Mary Littenham's death. If only he had flown home with her on that fatal day; if he had detained her in the office; if only they had lived together in the Jay Street apartment as lover and mistress so that Canarelli and all the world might have known it . . . that the nearest moment of the past is utterly gone could not stamp its final truth upon the empty repetition of his pain.

The law office in the Lecksher Building was busy, optimistic and prosperous. The firm of Myerberg, Meltofsky, Koch and Grannan was the storm center of three of the most notorious and melodramatic lawsuits in America: the unseating of Caridius in the Senate, the replevin suit for gold in Canada and the attempted collection of Merritt Littenham's income tax, as this firm furnished legal aid to the federal prosecution.

The income-tax suit really had been meant as a trade-in against Merritt Littenham's effort to unseat Caridius. But in the hands of the federal prosecution it slipped out of Myerberg's control, and in the same way Littenham would have been forced to finish his fight to oust Caridius through mere pressure of public sentiment. So no matter what was in the heads of both tacticians, their trade never could come off.

Meltofsky pursued his labors on these gigantic tasks with the endless persistence of the physically weak and stringy. His private office, under the unwinking green light, turned out masses of accounts, subpoenas duces tecum, writs of certiorari. The thin saffron-colored man moved about his work in a kind of clammy chill of concentration.

Once Caridius asked Meltofsky if he thought the papers which attacked him in the kidnaping tragedy had laid themselves open to a libel suit.

Meltofsky looked at Caridius intently for several moments and then said:

"In my opinion I believe the incident has been exploited, I don't believe it has any further advertising value for our firm."

Caridius had really come to the office to see Myerberg and to find out his standing in the firm. In riding from his apartment downtown he had remembered how, long ago, Myerberg had refused a partnership with him, and now he thought that perhaps the time had come when the lawyer would want to dissolve the one that had been formed.

When he entered Myerberg's office he found the lawyer in gusty good spirits. The short fellow got up from his chair, came and slapped Caridius on the shoulder with one hand and shook hands with the other. It was the first time they had seen each other since Myerberg's victorious return from Canada.

"Well, Caridius," he cried warmly, "we kept the money. It is lying in the bank in Montreal to our credit."

"It was a great fight," complimented the politician. "I followed it in the papers."

"And who didn't?" ejaculated the lawyer. "Who would have thought when you telephoned me from the flying field months ago, that it would have worked up into one of the causes célèbres of the decade?"

There was a slight pause as Caridius reflected what the telephone message had done to him and to his secretary. Myerberg saw the change in his friend's face and patted his arm more gently.

"Sit down," he said in brusque sympathy. "So you have lost your seat in the Senate while I was away?"

"Yes, I did."

Myerberg nodded his powerful head.

"Well, that's good, that's an exceptionally fortunate and brilliant manner in which to conclude your service in that distinguished body."

"Fortunate, how do you mean?"

Myerberg was a little surprised that he had to explain the obvious.

"Why, you have spent no time at all in the Senate and yet you are one of the best advertised men in America. To-day, as I was coming in on the train, I saw a column in one of the papers about you . . . about what people thought of you. . . . Some reporter had gone out into the streets and asked the first fifty persons he met what they thought of you." The short man reached for his traveling bag and began rumpling through it looking for the column which he had torn out. He produced it with satisfaction and knocked it smooth with a backhanded flap. "Now that's publicity! That's advertising when the first fifty men a reporter meets on the street not only know who you are but have formed a definite opinion as to your guilt or innocence."

Caridius began to see Myerberg's point of view.

"Still, it would have been better if I had kept my seat," persisted the politician.

"Better! My God, man, you're crazy! Why, half the people in this state don't know the name of their other senator. And in the whole senatorial body there are not three names familiar to the people of the United States! If you had remained in the Senate, Caridius, I am speaking frankly as man to man, you would have relapsed into another nonentity like Loree and the other ninety-odd men I could mention if I only knew their names. But thank God fortune has rescued you from the obscurity of the Senate and the complete anonymity of the House and with one stroke has brought you, if not fame, at least notoriety.

"And between the two, sir, give me notoriety!" Myerberg clapped his friend's back. "Fame appeals to the more thoughtful, the selective, the precious, but notoriety stands on the street corner and bawls your name over the radio, in the vaudeville, in the newspapers! It's a splendid thing, a great asset, very valuable, notoriety is!"

Caridius had not thought of this side of the situation, and now, with a somewhat changed and enheartened viewpoint, he asked if his relations to the firm were to remain in the future what they had been in the past.

Myerberg glanced up from his bag in which he was still searching.

"I see what you mean, and I don't blame you a bit."

"Blame me?"

"No, I say I don't. You feel that you should now have your name in the title of the firm . . . possibly ahead of mine, eh?"

"Why, no, no, I didn't mean——"

The short man held up a hand and smiled wisely.

"I see you did, your protestations convince me. Listen, I know your name has advertising value now. But neither am I unknown, I have won the Canadian lawsuit."

"But really, really . . ." protested Caridius, feeling very much set up within himself.

"No, we will do this. Next Friday afternoon, when we have our regular meeting of all the members of the firm, we will take up the matter of a change in our style. Neither you nor I will vote, and we'll leave it to the others. Now isn't that fair?"

"That's perfectly satisfactory," agreed Caridius.

At this point their talk was interrupted by Myerberg's telephone buzzing desperately. The lawyer went over to it.

"Hello. . . . Hello. . . . This is Myerberg! . . . What? . . . *What*, arrested Canarelli! The hell you say! . . . Well, bail him out! . . . Where in the hell are our bailors that we keep in a room in Pfeifferman's office? . . . Not there, which, the bailors or the room? . . . Oh, the trial, then where the devil is the trial? . . . What? . . . What? . . . How in the hell did the trial ever come before a federal judge? . . . that wasn't a federal offense, killing a girl and extorting a ransom, that's just a state offense! . . . Oh my Lord! . . . Yes, yes, I see. . . . My God, I didn't think of that! . . . I'll come right down!"

He plopped his receiver in its fork and reached for his hat.

"What's the matter?" asked Caridius.

"They've got Joe up before the federal judge for illegal

exportation of gold into Canada!" As he hurried to the door he called back, "You know, by God, I believe this whole Canadian suit was just a trick to pin onto Joe unequivocally the ownership of that Goddamned gold!"



51

THE TRIAL and conviction of Joseph Canarelli before the federal court in Megapolis for the illegal exportation of gold from the United States into Canada was a cause which, in the end, bore a close analogy to the final downfall of Henry Lee Caridius himself.

Caridius took no part in this trial, although he was a member of the firm, Myerberg, Caridius, Meltofsky, Koch and Grannan, which defended the noted racketeer. He would have been of no assistance to the subtle Meltofsky or the dynamic Myerberg. And then, too, he could not find it in his heart to say a word in defense of the man who had carried out a crime which had affected his own life so deeply.

Unfortunately for the success of Myerberg's firm the United States government had established two unescapable facts upon which to found the conviction of the racketeer: the ownership of the gold and its prior transportation by air from Megapolis to Montreal.

Myerberg argued before the court that Canarelli had applied at the Westover National Bank for the bullion before the expiration of the governmental time limit. This time limit, he contended, provided a day of grace for millionaires to get their gold out of the country before the final closing

down on the savings of the great American middle class and its definite confiscation by the government. He argued that this day of grace was the equivalent of a contract, and so the end of the time limit could not affect the legal validity of an exportation which had begun within the legal time limit.

Meltofsky, in his defense, advanced the subtler and very widely admired argument that the days of grace allowed to millionaires to ship their gold from the country were a virtual acknowledgment on the part of the government that the gold embargo did not apply to millionaires at any time. He argued that it was a fact, proved by precedent, that American millionaires were not citizens of the United States but were autonomous powers coördinate with the federal government. That they therefore could not be arraigned and tried before the national courts but were subject only to treaty obligations and the processes of international law, and that the present suit could lie only in the World Court at Geneva. He therefore prayed for a change of venue.

Both these pleas were disallowed by the judge on the technical grounds that while racketeers were American millionaires *de facto*, they were not American millionaires *de jure* and so had no claim to the rights and privileges of millionaires if such rights and privileges really did exist. So the court, according to the principle of legal economy, did not enter into these two arguments advanced by the defending lawyers.

The result of the trial was that the court imposed on Canarelli a maximum fine of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars and twenty years' imprisonment at hard labor. Whitey Lang received ten years at hard labor as an accomplice before the fact.

Caridius did not attend any part of this trial, but in the daily papers which covered their front pages with a verbatim report of the evidence and arguments he read that the racketeer seemed unable to grasp that he had been sentenced to half a lifetime in a federal prison. Then he flew

into a rage and screamed and cursed and threatened the judge and the court and tore at his black marcelled hair, and eventually, when the guards had clubbed him into submission, he walked out of the courtroom sobbing and trying to smooth his hair again.

There were, of course, appeals and appeals. At one moment Canarelli would be at large on some fantastically huge bond, at another time he would be in prison awaiting a new trial. There was a nation-wide discussion as to whether or not these appeals would ever end and the original sentence of the court be carried out.

So completely was the public mind engrossed in the fortunes of Joe Canarelli that relatively little attention was paid to the arrest of Caridius and his criminal trial before the same federal court for election frauds.

As in the case of Canarelli the prosecuting attorney appeared before the federal bench with the government's case already prepared and sealed.

All that was necessary was to reassemble the witnesses and written evidence used against Caridius by the Senatorial Investigating Committee, and the prosecution was in a position to present its case to the jury without argument.

There was, of course, argument, and Myerberg's speech in Caridius' defense drew the sympathy of the audience to the prisoner and laid the foundation of Mrs. Ellora Caridius' great subsequent success. Myerberg arose before the packed courtroom and the bar and began with the dramatic air of his race,

"Gentlemen of the jury, your honor, and members of the court: May it please your honor, this is the second time within this session of the court that I have appeared before this tribunal defending men against charges which have never been preferred against them; charges whose evidence has never been opened by the prosecution, or purified by the purge of cross examination, or submitted to the jury for their consideration.

"The real case for which a former client of mine was fined

half his fortune and imprisoned for the remainder of his life in a federal penitentiary was not the transportation of gold out of America. That pretext was merely the noose which a retiarius used to entangle his foe, the real *casus delicti* in that instance . . . and in this . . . was a heinous and abominable crime.

"It was a crime, gentlemen of the jury, which, if its evidence had been presented before you and conviction secured, would have deserved the utmost and severest punishment which lies within your discretion to inflict. But . . . it was a crime which should have been stated and proved before conviction was decided upon and punishment meted out. This never was done. My former client should have been given his day in court. That never was done.

"He was convicted, fined and sentenced at the bar of public opinion in America in flagrant violation of that ancient bill of rights which the English barons wrung from the reluctant hands of King John in 1215 and which has been the fortress of the innocent and the terror of the guilty and which, up until the present moment, has been preserved as a precious heritage by every people whose juristic system harks back to the ancient common law of England.

"My client today, the Honorable Henry Lee Caridius, is arraigned as *particeps criminis* for the same savage, diabolical, but unproved and unmentioned deed for which my former client now is doing penal servitude for life.

"The pretext, this time, is not the transportation of gold but fraud in election; a fraud which is common to all elections and to all candidates who possess the slightest hope of becoming elected.

"The opposition show in their own proof that they spent three times as much money upon the election as did the supporters of Mr. Caridius. Their own proof shows that Caridius did not receive the ballots of the venial voters which he thought he had purchased: they were all overbought by the henchman of Senator Loree. Caridius was

elected by a huge, popular and unpurchased vote because he represented a popular and an unpurchased cause.

"For you, gentlemen of the jury, seriously to question or deliberately to punish a political victory which came nearer than any election in recent history to being an exposition of the will of the submerged and forgotten suffrage of America is a travesty of justice and a satire on popular government.

"To offset the real charge behind this camouflage of a prosecution I can offer you no rebutting evidence because not one breath of primary evidence has been placed before this court.

"I cannot even hint to you gentlemen that there existed between my client and one who must remain unmentioned here one of the tenderest and most beautiful relations that has ever cheered the lonely heart of man. I could recount, if I were permitted by the rules of evidence, a romance of such sweetness and purity, of such pathos and tragedy, that its mere mention would melt your hearts out of simple pity as men.

"That cannot be done. Not even by the vaguest intimation can I suggest there ever existed so piteous a drama as I myself have the surest knowledge did exist.

"So what can I offer you gentlemen in way of defending my client from the damning charge that he has acted as all other politicians have acted from time immemorial? I am disarmed. I cannot wield the sword of evidence to beat back or wound the strangling fog of popular opinion boiling up out of the kettles of melodramatic American journalism.

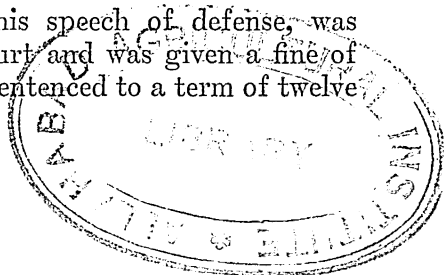
"I can only ask you to look at my client. You have all yielded your hearts to his silver persuasion in our national forum. Your vote shows that. Does he now appear to be of so monstrous and homicidal a bent that he would do to death a woman he so tenderly cherished? I cannot read your purpose, gentlemen of the jury. I cannot read the tears in your eyes because I am blinded by the tears in my own. But if you persist in disregarding the Magna Carta, that legal safeguard wherewith the wisdom and prudence of the ages have

hedged dictatorship, absolutism, autocracy and tyranny, then send this man to prison for spending foolish money against the overpowering wealth of plutocratic corruption and still gaining office by his honesty, bravery and personal charm.

"But when you do so condemn my client, remember that in the Southern part of these United States, where live a people somewhat franker and more outspoken than ourselves, the rash, blind and popular punishment of a crime untried in any court is called lynching."

The jury must have been greatly impressed by Myerberg's defense because they were out for nearly six hours. Three times they offered by their foreman the decision that the defendant was innocent: this the presiding judge disallowed. Eventually they found Caridius guilty as charged and recommended the minimum penalty which was a year and a day in the penitentiary. Such was the sentence imposed.

Sol Myerberg, for making his speech of defense, was found guilty of contempt of court and was given a fine of twelve hundred dollars and was sentenced to a term of twelve hours in jail.



EVEN SOL MYERBERG, who had come on his ironic mission to Caridius' apartment, was not his usual exuberant self. He began justifying to Ellora the course which he and Caridius had decided upon.

"Yes, this is distinctly the best thing to do," he nodded at the tearful woman. "Of course we could appeal and ap-

peal and keep Henry clear of—of everything for an indeterminate period, or perhaps he might never have to—to go away at all, but the suspense would hang over him, it would cripple his activity with the firm.”

“Yes, that’s right, Ellora,” stressed Caridius, looking at his wife and then at the pretty modern living room of their apartment which he was leaving, “and I’ll be back . . . it won’t be so long.”

“It is going to seem longer to us down at the office than it will to you, Mrs. Caridius, now that Meltofsky is leaving us,” suggested Myerberg in a persistently cheerful tone.

Caridius looked at his partner.

“Meltofsky is not withdrawing from the firm?”

The short stout man shrugged and smiled briefly.

“Oh yes, the Westover Trust Company made him an offer he couldn’t afford to turn down. You know when you lick Littenham he hires you.” The senior partner stood smiling wryly for a moment. “I could go into a string of sociological deductions on such a custom, but what’s the use? . . . Davey is marrying on the strength of it today.”

Ellora took her first glimmer of interest in Myerberg’s vaguely soothing conversation.

“Who is Mr. Meltofsky marrying?”

“I don’t know . . . a Mary somebody or other . . . that’s all we ever heard over the telephone . . . Miss Mary.”

To Ellora, packing her husband’s bag, for the world to move on in the midst of her tragedy with weddings and joyance seemed too heartless and indifferent, and she began a silent and uncontrollable weeping.

The Jew turned to her with a movement of sympathy.

“Mrs. Caridius, don’t feel like that. This doesn’t amount to a row of pins. Why, in these days there are so many governors and cabinet members and congressmen in the penitentiary that it is nothing more than a big political club. And Henry is going there absolutely for nothing. It is going to be the biggest advertisement he can possibly get,

you know . . . innocence in prison . . . why, hell, I'm sincere . . . in the long run, nothing, nothing could have happened to him that would have promoted him better, right from the ground up!" The lawyer clenched his powerful fist and made a slow pushing uppercut with it in the air, "And it's yourself you've got to think about. . . . Listen, I wouldn't pack too many things in his bag . . . he won't need so much."

Ellora stared at the bag in which she was arranging her husband's usual layout. The realization that he would not need it, that he would be given prison clothes, almost broke her heart.

Myerberg patted her arm.

"Sh . . . sh . . . don't feel that way! Just wait . . . wait for the backwash in public sentiment. Why, when that comes, Mrs. Caridius, you yourself could make a mint of money . . . if you wanted to."

"I-I-ee?" gasped the wife, trying to control herself.

"Why of course you could . . . in vaudeville . . . in the movies . . . over the radio . . . anywhere just to let the American people see the wife of the man who went to the penitentiary because his fellow citizens elected him to the Senate over the bribery and political corruption of a plutocratic machine. Yes, this is going to be a big thing for all of us!"

With this ebullient observation the moment arrived for the two men to go. Myerberg was on Caridius' bond. Now they planned to travel together to the federal prison; there Myerberg would deliver his prisoner, cancel the bond, and allow the ex-congressman's sentence of a year and a day to begin to run. It would save Caridius the humiliation of making the trip in the company of a United States marshal.

Caridius took Ellora in his arms and in trying to comfort her unloosed the flood of her grief.

"Oh, darling, you won't come back any more. . . . I'll never see you again . . . you'll take t. b. . . . prisoners always take t. b. . . ."

"No, no," assured the lawyer, "the federal prisons are very high class."

"Telephone me every day if . . . if you're well, honey . . . and happy. . . . I'll be so scared for you and so miserable!"

Kissing her over and over Caridius promised he would telephone her every day, or at least write . . . as often as he could. Then he moved away from her, holding out his hand toward her in a kind of spiritual caress and promise of love and faithfulness throughout his prison sentence. And so he and Myerberg entered the waiting taxicab and drove away.

For a space the two men rode in silence. It seemed to Caridius that Ellora's weeping was still with him. He saw her sitting in the living room weeping as clearly as if he stood beside her. And so her grief would remain with him for a space, present and heartbreaking, until it too would begin to edge imperceptibly into the past.

And presently it grew upon the convicted man that this aching bond between him and his wife was the real reason of Mary Littenham's death. Had he been able to break that bond, had he begun proceedings against his wife for his marital freedom, if only he had lived frankly in free love with Mary Littenham and given the world notice of their liaison, then Whitey Lang would never have abducted her in the airplane . . . Here some mental mechanism abruptly cut off this stream of thought and left him riding emptily along by Sol Myerberg's side.

At the air depot, Myerberg procured tickets for Atlanta, then bought a sheaf of papers at the news stand and took them aboard the outgoing ship. The two men found adjoining seats near the front of the cabin, and Caridius took a handful of the papers as a kind of buffer for his thoughts.

Oddly enough he did find something of interest, an account of the final adjudication of the Littenham income-tax suit. Before the final court, Littenham admitted that he had paid no income tax for the last six years. But he filed as a plea

in abatement that he possessed in the vaults of the Westover Trust Company a very full and complete stamp collection which was worth far more than his income tax would have amounted to. He called from Paris, as a witness, a very distinguished French philatelist who was placed upon the witness stand and who testified that the Littenham stamp collection was worth far in excess of three millions of dollars. This three millions was the amount of income tax which would have been assessed against Littenham had he been an ordinary American citizen. The treasury department of the federal government had agreed to accept, in lieu of the three-million-dollar tax, a residuary legatee's interest in Mr. Littenham's marvelous stamp collection, which would become government property in event of Merritt Littenham's death.

Immediately following this account was a little news item stating that three more foreign governments had defaulted in the payments of their debts to the United States.

The conclusion of the income-tax suit was so shocking that it caused Caridius momentarily to forget that he was on his way to prison. He pointed out the article to Myerberg.

The lawyer glanced at it and evidently had read it.

"That is natural," he called above the drone of the motors, "this is a country of individualists. Our people are a vast nation of highly selected individualists who have been sifted by the hardships of emigration from all the other peoples of the earth. Each man came to America to free himself from governmental restraint and advance his own personal fortune.

"And these emigrants fell into a wonderful new world; so far withdrawn from the old world they were in no danger of being attacked; so rich within itself that its new owners felt no need for further expansion. Therefore this New World was absolved from the Old World necessity of military discipline.

"But military discipline is the one cementing force that

binds one man's fortunes to another's. With this necessity evaded, a necessity which had bound the human race throughout its history, the idea of individualism, that each individual should work purely for his own personal advancement, broke into an astonishing flower.

"All our political and social and religious milieu is the result of every man working whole-heartedly and exclusively for himself. It will continue until——"

Caridius' attention was suddenly snatched away from Myerberg's cynical summation of the American picture. On the electric signboard in the front of the cabin there flashed the warning:

"Passengers put on life belts . . . approaching Atlanta."

With the thrill of meeting an inevitable terror, Caridius peered ahead through his cabin window. Atlanta was a little reddish patch on the southernmost rim of the great concavity that was the earth. It seemed a kind of access of irony that a man should be flying amid the wide liberty of the earth and sky to serve a year-long sentence in some iron molecule of such a tiny spot.

An hour later, when Caridius entered the blank face of the federal prison in Atlanta, all those nice definitions of time such as hours, minutes and seconds ceased for the new prisoner, and in their stead came a gross undifferentiated succession of nights and days.

When his routine was established Caridius worked by day in the prison kitchen; by night he lay in his cell and remembered his past. As he grew accustomed to his solitary bunk, desire came to him and burdened his sleep with erotic and tantalizing dreams.

He kept in a kind of discontinuous touch with the world, sometimes by letters, again by newspapers. Once he read that Joe Canarelli, the racketeer, was in prison and needed money to continue his legal fight for freedom. The strange thing was the American people were sending hundreds of thousands of dollars to assist the racketeer in his endless appeals. And yet Caridius knew that this was characteristic

of the American public. A residual loyalty to their rulers, a leftover from monarchical days, moved the hearts of the great American middle class and caused them to rally to the support of a man whose rule had been inequitable, base and murderous.

"But then," Caridius thought grayly to himself, "what people of the earth has not been guilty of the same senseless fealty?"

At a considerable later date this atavistic trait in the American people came much closer home to Caridius than that. He received a letter from Myerberg telling him that a special election had been called to fill the place left vacant by his own imprisonment, and that there was a public demand that Ellora Caridius should enter the race.

The letter excited the prisoner to a high degree. That night his sleep was filled with fantastic dreams. He dreamed that the election was approaching and that Jim Essary came to him and refused to vote for him because he, Henry Caridius, had brought about Rose Essary's death. And in his dream Caridius said, no, he had not caused Rose Essary's death, it was Mary Littenham whom he had killed. And a most terrible sorrow rushed upon Caridius in his dream. But Essary grew angry and cried out, "No, it was my wife, Rose, that you killed, there stands Miss Littenham, you can see for yourself it was not she!"

Caridius looked around, and there beside him in his cell indeed stood Mary Littenham, tall and beautiful, looking at him with soft and humid eyes. And Caridius sat up in his bunk reaching for the vision which he saw in the darkness. And she faded into the bolts and bars of his cell. The rest of the night the man lay trying to read the symbolism of his mournful and tantalizing dream. Myerberg's letter, of course, lay at the root of the phantasy, but why should it bring in the Essarys and Mary Littenham?

A few days later the warden came and asked Caridius if he had a wife who was making a political campaign. The prisoner said he had. The warden then took Caridius into

his office and allowed him to listen to a speech that Ellora was making over the radio. It was an incisive argument asking her radio audience to right the wrong done her husband by a plutocratic state. It really was a moving address and had in it the fire and swing of Sol Myerberg at his best. The lawyer undoubtedly had written it, and Ellora delivered it very well indeed. In fact, she had so moved the warden, who happened to be listening in, that he had called Caridius to hear his wife speak.

About two months later Caridius received the following telegram. The warden brought it to the prisoner and congratulated him. It read:

Your wife elected to your seat in the Senate by an unprecedented majority. No money was used. We promise you to keep the name Caridius fresh in the hearts, if not the heads, of the American people. Expecting you home soon. Sol.

The fact that his wife was a United States senator greatly ameliorated Caridius' position in prison. He was made a trusty and given an executive position keeping the kitchen accounts with an assistant to do the actual paper work.

Four days after the election a guard told Caridius that a woman visitor had called to see him in the reception room. Gladness, and at the same time a kind of strangeness, came over Caridius at the thought of seeing his wife who was now a United States senator. He knew she had come to plan his release. She probably could obtain it, but as he walked to the visitors' room a question of politics arose in the prisoner's mind. If he served out a full year for being elected to the Senate by an unbought vote it would give him a sentimental grip on the voters of Megapolis for the next decade. And Caridius knew that the only grip any man could have on the voters of America was a sentimental grip.

Now, would he endanger that hold by accepting a pardon? He did not know, and his whole future might hang

more or less upon the answer. As he approached the visitors' room, he determined to discuss very carefully with his wife the advisability of applying for or accepting a pardon. Then, at the door of the room, all these reasonings vanished away in the simple anticipation of seeing Ellora again. The guard admitted Caridius and closed the door after him.

In the reception room stood a sad middle-aged woman whom the prisoner did not know. He stood looking at her blankly until he collected himself and asked with a faint bow:

"You asked to see me, madam, did you not? . . . I am Henry Caridius."

The woman came a little nearer.

"You don't know me either, do you? . . . I am Rose Essary."

"Oh yes. . . . Mrs. Essary, . . . Certainly I remember you."

And now he really did. Under the lines of her face he saw again the girlish woman whom he had known in the munitions plant laboratory.

"I have just come back to America from Japan," she explained, "and . . . I came to you because I heard you were in trouble and . . . because you were always such a good friend of Jim's."

The manner in which she said this sent a touch of apprehension through Caridius.

"Yes, we have always been the warmest friends. . . . He . . . Jim's all right, isn't he?"

Then she told him that Jim had died in Japan. Jim and Kumata and another officer in the Japanese army had worked on Jim's electrical invention. They had reproduced on a large scale the little machine which Jim had used to kill mice in his laboratory at the munitions plant.

Caridius nodded with a growing fear as he recalled the motionless death of the mouse.

Rose went on in her gray monotone:

"Of course Jim was the only foreigner who knew any-

thing about the machine. When it was completed he and Kumata went out on the field to set up a target. The other Japanese officer, by accident, turned on the current while both men were down there, and they were killed.

"The officer whose carelessness caused the tragedy later shot himself. Kumata was what they called a Samurai, but the other officer was not. He was just an ordinary Japanese soldier. . . . Kumata's death and . . . and this man's suicide out of . . . remorse . . . made it all appear completely accidental. . . ."

In the reception room of the prison the two Americans talked on in shocked tones of Jim Essary's death.

